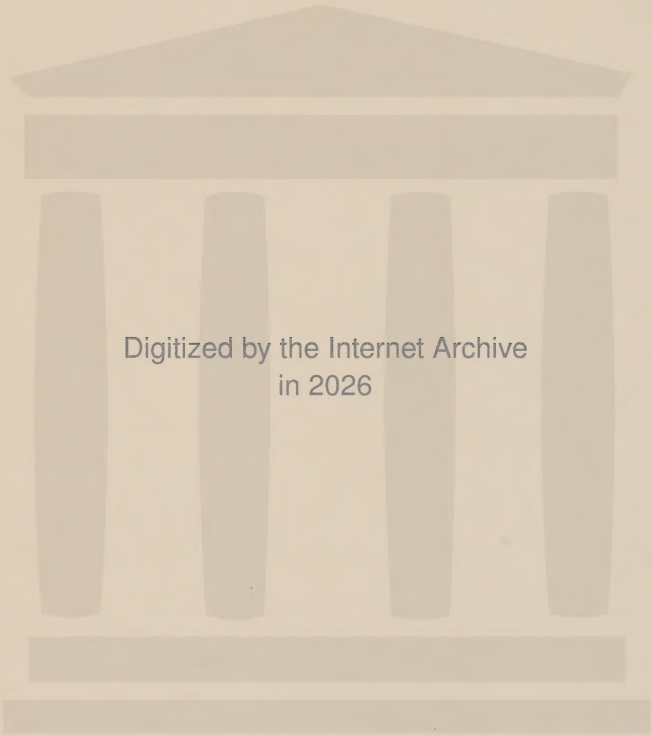
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THE

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SERMONS PREACHED AND REVISED

BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

DURING THE YEAR 1888.

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The Baptist Union Censure.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

THE censure passed upon me by the Council of the Baptist Union will be weighed by the faithful, and estimated at its true value. "Afterwards they have no more that they can do." I brought no charges before the members of the Council, because they could only judge by their constitution, and that document lays down no doctrinal basis except the belief that "the immersion of believers is the only Christian baptism." Even the mention of evangelical sentiments has been cut out from their printed programme. No one can be heterodox under this constitution, unless he should forswear his baptism. I offered to pay the fee for Counsel's opinion upon this matter, but my offer was not accepted by the deputation. There was, therefore, nothing for me to work upon, whatever evidence I might bring. What would be the use of exposing myself to threatened law-suits to gain nothing at all? Whatever may be said to the contrary, if we go to its authorized declaration of principles, it is clear that the Union is incompetent for any doctrinal judgment, except it should be needful to ascertain a person's views on baptism. I decline to submit to it any case which would be quite beyond its powers. Would any rational man act otherwise? I have rather too much proof than too little; but I am not going to involve others in litigation when nothing is to be gained.

I do not complain of the censure of the Council, or feel the least care about it. But was this the intent of its *loving* resolution? Is this the claw which was concealed by the velvet pad of its vote to send four doctors of divinity to me "to deliberate how the unity of the denomination can be maintained in truth, and love, and good works"? Did those who passed that resolution mean—we send these four men to put him to the question? Why, then, did they not say so? Did the world ever hear of such a result of a "deliberation"? The person with whom they deliberate upon union "in truth, and love, and good works" is questioned and condemned! Let plain-sailing Christian men judge between me and this Council.

The question now to be answered is—"Does this decision represent the opinion of the Baptist Union?" It may be so. It may be that the Council is elected in such a manner that it is fairly representative. It may be that the churches will admire the conduct of their prominent men. I do not believe it. It is not for me, as an outsider, to raise the question; but surely there are members of the Union who will consider it, and act accordingly.

I have, in simple brotherly kindness, given the advice which was asked of me; but had I known the secret object of the deputation from the Council, I would not have given it any advice of any sort. These gentlemen came, avowedly, to me to deliberate upon "unity in truth, and love, and good works"; but their real errand was not what was openly avowed. What they were driving at is made clear by the facts. Before considering as a Council the advice which, in any fair English construction of the words, was the object aimed at, they censure the man with whom they professed to deliberate. How is this consistent

with itself? It is quite as well that their resolutions should be as incomprehensible as their doctrinal position is indefinable. But this goes far to render my recommendations useless. Is it not a waste of breath to deliberate under such circumstances? When language is used rather to conceal a purpose than to express it, it becomes fearfully doubtful whether any form of doctrine can be so worded as to be of the slightest use. Nevertheless, I would like all Christendom to know that all I asked of the Union is that it be formed on a Scriptural basis; and that I never sought to intrude upon it any Calvinistic or other personal creed, but only that form of belief which has been accepted for many years by the Evangelical Alliance, which includes members of well-nigh all Christian communities.

To this it was replied that there is an objection to any creed whatever. This is a principle which one may fairly discuss. Surely, what we believe may be stated, may be written, may be made known; and what is this but to make and promulgate a creed? Baptists from the first have issued their confessions of faith. Even the present Baptist Union itself has a creed about baptism, though about nothing else. The churches of which it is composed have nearly all of them a creed of some sort, and the very men who object to a creed many of them hold offices which require adhesion to certain doctrines, implied, if not actually written down. Trust-deeds of chapels and colleges usually have some doctrinal declaration; and how persons who hold positions connected with churches and institutions having creeds can fairly object to them when they meet in a united character, I am quite unable to see. Certain members of the Council talk about having expelled Unitarians: does not this admit that they have already an unwritten Trinitarian creed? Why not print it? Possibly "modern thought" has methods of getting over this which have never occurred to my unsophisticated mind.

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To say that "a creed comes between a man and his God," is to suppose that it is not true; for truth, however definitely stated, does not divide the believer from his Lord. So far as I am concerned, that which I believe I am not ashamed to state in the plainest possible language; and the truth I hold I embrace because I believe it to be the mind of God revealed in his infallible Word. How can it divide me from God who revealed it? It is one means of my communion with my Lord, that I receive his words as well as himself, and submit my understanding to what I see to be taught by him. Say what he may, I accept it because he says it, and therein pay him the humble worship of my inmost soul.

I am unable to sympathize with a man who says he has no creed; because I believe him to be in the wrong by his own showing. He ought to have a creed. What is equally certain, he has a creed—he must have one, even though he repudiates the notion. His very unbelief is, in a sense, a creed.

The objection to a creed is a very pleasant way of concealing objection to discipline, and a desire for latitudinarianism. What is wished for is a Union which will, like Noah's Ark, afford shelter both for the clean and for the unclean, for creeping things and winged fowls.

Every Union, unless it is a mere fiction, must be based upon certain

principles. How can we unite except upon some great common truths? And the doctrine of baptism by immersion is not sufficient for a groundwork. Surely, to be a Baptist is not everything. If I disagree with a man on ninety-nine points, but happen to be one with him in baptism, this can never furnish such ground of unity as I have with another with whom I believe in ninety-nine points, and only happen to differ upon one ordinance. To form a union with a single Scriptural ordinance as its sole distinctive reason for existence has been well likened to erecting a pyramid upon its apex: the whole edifice must sooner or later come down. I am not slow to avow my conviction that the immersion of believers is the baptism of Holy Scripture, but there are other truths beside this; and I cannot feel fellowship with a man because of this, if in other matters he is false to the teaching of Holy Scripture.

To alter the foundation of a building is a difficult undertaking. Underpinning is expensive and perilous work. It might be more satisfactory to take the whole house down, and reconstruct it. If I had believed that the Baptist Union could be made a satisfactory structure, I could not then have remained in it; because to do so would have violated my conscience. But *my* conscience is no guide for others. Those who believe in the structure, and think that they can rectify its foundation, have my hearty sympathy in the attempt. Let them give themselves to it earnestly and with firm resolve: they will have need of all their earnestness and resolution. In the Assembly, in the Associations, and in the churches they can urge their views, and make it plain that they mean to make the Union an avowedly Evangelical body on the old lines of faith. This they must do boldly, and without flinching. I have no very assured hope of their success, for the difficulties are exceedingly great; but let them combine, and work unitedly, and persistently, year after year, and they may do something, if not everything. It is not for me to lead in a work which I have been forced to abandon; but there are other men who are less known, but not less resolute, and these should take their turn. The warfare has been made too personal; and certain incidents in it, upon which I will not dwell, have made it too painful for me to feel any pleasure in the idea of going on with it. It might even appear that I desired to be reinstated in the Union, or wished to head a party in it, and this is very far from my mind. But let no man imagine that I shall cease from my protests against false doctrine, or lay down the sword of which I have thrown away the scabbard. However much invited to do so, I shall not commence personalities, nor disclose the wretched facts in all their details; but with confirmatory evidence perpetually pouring in upon me, and a solemn conviction that the dark conspiracy to overthrow the truth must be dragged to light, I shall not cease to expose doctrinal declension wherever I see it. With the Baptist Union, as such, I have now no hampering connection; but so far as it takes its part in the common departure from the truth, it will have to put up with my strictures, although it has so graciously kicked me under pretext of deliberation.

Will those who are with me in this struggle remember me in their constant prayers to the Lord, whom in this matter I serve in my soul and spirit?

(From THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL Magazine, February, 1888).

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"A LITTLE SANCTUARY."

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 8TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."—Ezekiel xi. 16.

THE text begins with "therefore." There was a reason for God's speaking in this way. It is profitable to trace the why and the wherefore of the gracious words of the Lord. The way by which a promise comes usually shines with a trail of light. Upon reading the connection we observe that those who had been carried captive were insulted by those who tarried at Jerusalem. They spoke in a very cruel manner to those with whom they should have sympathized. How often do prosperous brothers look with scorn on the unfortunate! Did not Job of old complain, "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease"?

The Lord hears the unkind speeches of the prosperous when they speak bitterly of those who are plunged in adversity. Read the context—"Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession." This unbrotherly language moved the Lord to send the prophet Ezekiel with good and profitable words to the children of the captivity. Many a time the cruel word of man has been the cause of a tender word from God. Because of the unkindness of these people, therefore God, in lovingkindness, addressed in words of tender grace those whom they despised. As, in our Saviour's days, the opposition of the Pharisees acted upon the Saviour like a steel to the flint, and fetched bright sparks of truth out of him, so the wickedness of man has often been the cause why the grace of God has been more fully revealed. This is some solace when under the severe chastisement of human tongues.

Personally, I am glad of this comfort. I would gladly be at peace with all men: I would not unnecessarily utter a word of provocation; but it is a world in which you cannot live at peace unless you are willing to be unfaithful to your conscience. Offences, therefore, will

come. But why should we fret unduly under this trial when we perceive that out of opposition to the cause of God occasions arise for the grandest displays of God's love and power? If from the showers we gain our harvests, we will not mourn when the heavens gather blackness, and the rain pours down. If the wrath of man is made to praise the Lord, then let man be wrathful if he wills. Brethren, let us brace ourselves to bear the bruises of slanderous tongues! Let us take all sharp speeches and cutting criticisms to God. It may be that he will hear what the enemy has said, and that he will be very pitiful to us. Because of the bitterness of the oppressor he will bring home to our heart by the Spirit, with greater tenderness and power, some sweet word of his which has lain hidden from us in his Book. Be not dismayed, but go to him who is the God of all comfort, who comforteth all those that are bowed down, and he will give you a word which shall heal your wounds, and breathe peace into your spirit.

Now to proceed at once to our text, seeing that the occasion of it is a sufficient preface. Let us notice, first, *where God's people may be, and yet be God's people.* They may be by God's own hand "scattered among the countries, and cast far off among the heathen." And, secondly, *what God will be to them when they are in such circumstances.* "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." May the Holy Spirit, who spake by Ezekiel, speak through these words to our hearts!

I. First, then, WHERE GOD'S PEOPLE MAY BE.

If you ask where they may be, the answer to the question is, first, *they may be under chastisement.*

If you will remember, in the Book of Deuteronomy, God threatened Israel that if they, as a nation, sinned against him, they should be scattered among the nations, and cast far off among the heathen. Many a time they so sinned. I need not recapitulate the story of their continued transgressions and multiplied backslidings. The Lord was slow to fulfil his utmost threatenings, but put forth his utmost patience, till there was no more room for long-suffering. At last the threatened chastisement fell upon them, and fierce nations carried them away in bonds to the far-off lands of their dread. They were not utterly destroyed: their being scattered among the people showed that they still existed. Though they were a people scattered and peeled, yet they were a people, even as Israel is to this day. For all that tyrants and persecutors have ever done, yet the Jew is still extant among us, even as the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed. Israel is still to the front, and will be to the world's end. The Lord hath not cast away his people, even though he has cast them far off among the heathen. He has scattered them among the countries, but they are not absorbed into those countries; they still remain a people separated unto the living God, in whom he will yet be glorified.

But, assuredly, the chosen seed came under chastisement. When, by the rivers of Babylon, they sat down and wept, yea, they wept when they remembered Zion, then were they under the Lord's heavy hand. The instructed among them knew that their being in exile was the fruit of the transgressions of their fathers, and the result of their own offences against God. And yet, though they were under chastisement,

God loved them, and had a choice word for them, which I will by-and-by endeavour to explain to you; for the Lord said, "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary." Beloved, you and I may lie under the rod of God, and we may smart sorely because of our iniquities, even as David did; and yet we may be the children of God towards whom he has thoughts of grace. Our moisture may be turned into the drought of summer, while day and night the Lord's hand is heavy upon us; we may be in sore temporal trouble, and may be compelled by an enlightened conscience to trace our sorrow to our own folly. We may be in great spiritual darkness, and may be compelled to confess that our own sins have procured this unto ourselves. And yet, for all that, the Lord may have sent the chastisement in love, and in nothing else but love; and he may intend by it, not our destruction, but the destruction of the flesh; not our rejection, but our refining, not our curse, but our cleansing. Let us take comfort, seeing that God has a word to say to his mourners and to his afflicted, and that word in the text is a "yet" which serves to show that there is a clear limit to his anger. He smites, but it is with an "although" and a "yet": he scatters them to a distance, but he sends a promise after them, and says, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." In the Lord's hand towards his chosen there may be a rod, but not a sword. It is a heavy rod, but it is not a rod of iron. It is a rod that bruises, but it is not a rod that batters to pieces. God tempers our afflictions, severe though they may seem to be; and though, apparently, he strikes us with the blows of a cruel one, yet there is a depth unutterable of infinite love in every stroke of his hand. His anger endureth but for a night: he hastens to display his favour. Listen to his own words of overflowing faithfulness: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." However, it is clear that God's own people may be under chastisement.

But, secondly, wherever they are, whether they are under chastisement or not, *they are where the Lord has put them.* Read the text carefully: "Although *I* have cast them far off among the heathen, and although *I* have scattered them among the countries." The Lord's hand was in their banishment and dispersion: Jehovah himself inflicted the chastisement for sin. You say to me, "Why, it was Nebuchadnezzar who carried them away: the Babylonians and the Chaldeans took them captive." Yes, I know it was so; but the Lord regards these as instruments in his hand, and he says, "I have done it," just as Job, when the Chaldeans and the Sabeans had swept away his property, and his children had been destroyed through the agency of Satan, yet said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." The Lord was as truly in the taking away as he was in the giving. It is well to look beyond all second causes and instrumentalities. Do not get angry with those who are the nearer agents, but look to the First Cause. Do not get fretting about the Chaldeans and Sabeans. Let them alone, and Satan too. What have you to do

with them? Your business is with God. See *his* hand, and bow before it. Say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Come to that, for then you will be able to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Though your trials be peculiar, and your way be hedged up, yet the hand of the Lord is still in everything; and it behoves you to recognize it for your strengthening and consolation.

Note, next, that *the people of God may dwell in places of great discomfort.* The Jews were not in those days like the English, who colonize and find a home in the Far West, or even dwell at ease beneath sultry skies. An ancient Hebrew out of his own country was a fish out of water: out of his proper element. He was not like the Tyrian, whose ship went to Tarshish, and passed the Gates of Hercules, seeking the *Ultima Thule.* The Jew tarried at home. "I dwell among mine own people," said a noble woman of that nation; and she did but speak the mind of a home-loving people who settled each one upon his own patch of ground, and sat down under his vine and fig-tree, none making him afraid. Their Lord had driven them into a distant land, to rivers whose waters were bitter to their lips, even to the Tigris and the Euphrates. They were in a foreign country, where everything was different from their ways—where all the customs of the people were strange and singular. They would be a marked and despised people, nobody would fraternize with them, but all would pass them by in scorn. The Jews excited much prejudice, for, as their great adversary, the wicked Haman, said, "their laws were diverse from all people," and their customs had a peculiarity about them which kept them a distinct race. It must have been a great discomfort to God's people to dwell among idolaters, and to be forced to witness obscene rites and revolting practices. God's own favoured ones in these days may be living where they are as much out of place as lambs among wolves, or doves among hawks. Do not imagine that God makes a nest of down for all his eaglets. Why, they would never take to flying if he did not put thorns under them, and stir up their nest that they may take to their wings, and learn the heavenward flight to which they are predestinated! Perfect comfort on earth is no more to be expected than constant calm on the sea. Sleep in the midst of a battle, and ease when on the march, would be more in place than absolute rest in this present state. God meaneth not his children to take up their inheritance on this side Jordan. "This is not your rest: because it is polluted." And so he often puts us where we are very uncomfortable. Is there any Christian man who can say that he would, if he might, take up his lot for ever in this life? No, no. There is an irksomeness about our condition, disguise it as we may. In one way or another we are made to remember that we are in banishment. We have not yet come unto our rest. That rest "remaineth for the people of God," but as yet we have not come into the land which the Lord our God has given to us to be our place of rest. Some of God's servants feel this in a very peculiar manner, for their soul is among lions, and they dwell among those whose tongues are set on fire of hell. Abel was hated by Cain, Isaac was mocked by Ishmael, Joseph was among envious brethren, Moses was at first rejected by Israel, David was pursued by Saul, Elijah was

hunted by Jezebel, Mordecai was hated by Haman; and yet these men were wisely placed, and the Lord was eminently with them. I mention this in order that tried believers may still know that, however uncomfortable their position, it is nevertheless true that God has put them there for some good end.

The beloved of God may yet be in a place of great barrenness as to all spiritual good. "I have cast them far off among the heathen"—far off from my temple—far off from the place of my worship—far off from the shrine of my glory. "I have scattered them among the countries," where they will learn no good—where, on the contrary, they will see every abominable thing, and often feel like Lot, who was vexed with the filthy conversation of the people among whom he dwelt. We are not kept apart from the wicked by high walls, or guards of heavenly soldiery. Even our Lord did not pray that we should be taken out of the world. Grace builds neither monasteries nor nunneries. "Woe is me," is frequently the cry of God's chosen, "that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" David knew what it was to be cut off from the assemblies of the Lord's house, and to be in the cave or in the wilderness. It may be so with you, and yet you may be a child of God. You may not be out of your place, for the dear path to his abode may go straight through this barren land. You may have to pass for many a day through this great and terrible wilderness, this land of fiery serpents, and of great drought, on your way to the land that floweth with milk and honey. To make heaven the sweeter we may find our exile made bitter. Our education for eternity may necessitate spiritual tribulation, and bereavement from visible comforts. To be weaned from all reliance on outward means may be for our good, that we may be driven in upon the Lord, and made to know that he is all in all. Doubtless the jeers of Babylon endeared the quiet of Zion to the banished: they loved the courts of the Lord's house all the more for having sighed in the halls of the proud monarch.

Worse still, *the Lord's chosen may be under oppression through surrounding ungodliness and sin.* The captive Israelites found Babylonia and Chaldea to be a land of grievous oppression. They ridiculed them, and bade them sing them one of the songs of Zion. They required of them mirth when their hearts were heavy. On the festivals of their false gods they demanded that the worshippers of the Eternal One should help in their choirs, and tune their harps to heathenish minstrelsy. Even Daniel, in his high position under the Persian monarch, found that he was not without adversaries, who rested not till they had cast him into a den of lions. Those who were far away, whether in Babylonia or in Persia, found themselves the constant subjects of assault from the triumphant foe. They were crushed down, until they cried by reason of their oppression. It was not the first time that the people of God had been in the iron furnace. Did they not come forth from the house of bondage at the first, even from Egypt? Neither was Babylon the last place of trial for saints; for until the end of time the seed of the serpent will war with the seed of the woman. Is it not still true of us, as well as of our Saviour, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son"? Expect still to meet with opposition and oppression while you are

passing to the land where the seed shall possess the heritage. Those of us who bear public testimony may have to bear the brunt of the battle, and suffer much from angry tongues. Nevertheless, to us it shall be an evident token of the Lord's favour, inasmuch as he counts us worthy to suffer for his name's sake.

But enough of that. I am making a very long story about the grievous routes through which we wend our way to the Celestial City. We climb on hands and knees up the Hill Difficulty; we tremblingly descend the steep of Humiliation. We feel our way through the tremendous pass of the Shadow of Death, and hasten through Vanity Fair, and walk warily across the Enchanted Ground. Not much of the way could one fall in love with. Perhaps the only part of it is that Valley of Humiliation, where the shepherd boy sat down and sang his ditty among the wild flowers and the lambs. One might wish to be always there; but fierce adversaries invade even those tranquil meadows, for hard-by where the shepherd sang his happy pastoral Christian met Apollyon, and had to struggle hard for his life. Do you not remember the spot where

> "The man so bravely played the man,
> He made the fiend to fly"?

You see where God's people may be, and yet may be none the less, but all the more, under the divine protection. Are you in difficult places? Be not dismayed, for this way runs the road to glory. Sigh not for the dove's wing to hurry to your rest, but take the appointed path: the footsteps of your Lord are there.

II. So, now, I hasten at once into the sweet part of the subject, which consists of this: WHAT GOD WILL BE TO HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY GET INTO THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."

Brethren, the great sanctuary stood on Mount Sion, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." That glorious place which Solomon had builded was the shrine to which the Hebrew turned his eye: he prayed with his window open toward Jerusalem. Alas! when the tribes were carried away captive, they could not carry the holy and beautiful house with them, neither could they set up its like within the brazen gates of the haughty city. "Now," says the Lord God in infinite condescension, "I will be a travelling temple to them. I will be as a little sanctuary to each one of them. They shall carry my temple about with them. Wherever they are, I will be, as it were, a holy place to them." In using the word "little," the gracious God would seem to say, "I will condescend to them, and I will be as they are. I will bow down to their littleness, and I will be to each little one of them a little sanctuary." Even the temple which Solomon builded was not a fit habitation for the infinite Jehovah, and so the Lord will stoop a little further, and be unto his people, not as the sanctuary "exceedingly magnifical," but as a little temple suitable for the most humble individual, rather than as a great temple in which vast multitudes could gather. "I will be to them as a little sanctuary" is a greatly condescending promise, implying an infinite stoop of love. There is a good deal more in my text than I shall be able to bring

out, and I may seem, in making the attempt, to give you the same thought twice over. Please bear with me. Let me begin at the beginning.

A sanctuary was *a place of refuge.* You know how Joab fled to the horns of the altar to escape from Solomon's armed men: he ran to the temple hoping to find sanctuary there. In past ages, churches and abbeys and altars have been used as places of sanctuary to which men have fled when in danger of their lives. Take that sense, and couple it with the cities of refuge which were set up throughout all Israel, to which the man who killed another by misadventure might flee to hide himself from the manslayer. Now, beloved fellow-believer, wherever you are, wherever you dwell, God will be to you a constant place of refuge. You shall flee from sin to God in Christ Jesus. You shall flee from an accusing conscience to his pardoning love. You shall flee from daily cares to him who careth for you. You shall flee from the accusations of Satan to the advocacy of Jesus. You shall flee even from yourselves to your Lord, and he will be to you in all senses a place of refuge. This is the happy harbour of all saints in all weathers. Hither come all weather-beaten barques, and cast anchor in placid waters.

> "God is our refuge, tried and proved,
> Amid a stormy world:
> We will not fear though earth be moved,
> And hills in ocean hurled."

O my hearer, make the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, and then shalt thou know the truth of this text: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Wherever thou art cast, God will be to thee a suitable refuge, a little haven for thy little boat: not little in the sense that he cannot well protect thee; not little in the sense that his word is a small truth, or a small comfort, or a small protection, but little in this respect—that it shall be near thee, accessible to thee, adapted to thee. It is as though the refuge were portable in all our wanderings, a protection to be carried and kept in hand in all weathers. Thou shalt carry it about with thee wherever thou art, this "little sanctuary." Thy God, and thy thoughts of thy God, and thy faith in thy God, shall be to thee a daily, perpetual, available, present refuge. Oh, it is a delightful thought to my mind, that from every danger and every storm God will be to us an immediate refuge, which we carry about with us, so that we abide under the shadow of the Almighty!

Next, a sanctuary signifies also *a place of worship.* It is a place where the divine presence is peculiarly manifested—a holy place. It usually means a place where God dwells, a place where God has promised to meet with his people, a place of acceptance where prayers, and praises, and offerings come up with acceptance on his altar. Now, notice, God says to his people, when they are far away from the temple and Jerusalem, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." Not, "I have loved the people, and I will build them a synagogue, or I will lead others to build for them a meeting-place; but I myself will be to them as a little sanctuary." The Lord Jesus Christ himself is the true place of worship for saved souls. "There is no chapel in the place

where I live," says one. I am sorry to hear it, but chapels are not absolutely essential to worship, surely. Another cries, "There is no place of public worship of any sort where the gospel is fully and faithfully preached." This is a great want, certainly, but still, do not say, "I am far away from a place of worship." That is a mistake. No godly man is far away from a holy place. What is a place of worship? I hope that our bed-chambers are constantly places of worship. Place of worship? Why, it is one's garden where he walks and meditates. A place of worship? It is the field, the barn, the street, when one has the heart to pray. God will meet us by a well, a stone, a bush, a brook, a tree. He has great range of trysting-places when men's hearts are right.

> "Where'er we seek him he is found,
> And every place is hallowed ground."

When a man lives near to God, and abides in him, he should shake off the folly of superstition, and talk no more of holy places. God himself, his own presence makes a place of worship. Do you not catch the fulness of the thought? Yonder is Jacob. He lies down to sleep in a desert place with a stone for his pillow. No bishop had ever been upon the spot to consecrate it, no service had been held in the place by way of dedication, and yet when he awoke in the morning, he said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." God had been to his servant a little sanctuary in that instance, as he has been oftentimes since. Whenever you go to sea, God in your cabin shall be to you a little sanctuary. When you travel by railway, the carriage shall, through the Lord's presence, be a little sanctuary. God's presence, seen in a bit of moss, made in the desert for Mungo Park a little sanctuary. How often have the streets of London been to some of us as the golden pavements of the New Jerusalem, for God has been there! The Lord himself is the temple of saints in heaven, and he is their temple on earth. When God draws near to us, we worship and rejoice. Whenever we are abroad, and cannot come to the visible sanctuary where multitudes worship, let us ask the Lord to be to us as "a little sanctuary." Have not your hearts cried out as you have thought of this house when you have been far away—"Ziona, Ziona, the place of our solemn assemblies, when shall we return to thee? O sacred spot, where we have worshipped God, and God has met with us, and made the place of his feet glorious, when shall we again behold thee"? I shall not contend with the feeling; but I would supplant it with this higher thought: the Lord himself is our dwelling-place, and our holy temple. Hath he not said, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary"?

Now, go a little farther. Our God is to us *a place of stillness*. What was *the* sanctuary of old? The sanctuary was the most holy place, the third court, the innermost of all within the veil. It was the stillest place that ever was on earth: a closet of absolute silence. You must not think of the tabernacle in the wilderness as being a huge building. It was a small affair, and the innermost room of all was of narrow dimensions. The Holy of Holies was great for holiness,

but not for space. There was this peculiarity about it, that it was the shrine of unbroken quiet. Was ever a voice heard in it? Once in the year the high-priest went in, and filled it full of the smoke of incense as he waved his censer in the mystic presence; but otherwise it was a chamber in which there was no footfall of living thing, or voice of mortal man. Here was the home of absolute quiet and silence. The stillness within the Holy of Holies of the temple must have reached the intensity of awe. What repose one might enjoy who could dwell in the secret place of the Most High! How one sighs for stillness! We cannot get it to the full anywhere in this country: even to the loneliest hill-top the scream of the railway-engine rises to the ear. Utter and entire stillness, one of the richest joys on this side heaven, one cannot readily obtain. Those who live in the wear and tear of this city life—and it is an awful wear and tear—might well pay down untold gold to be still for a while. What would we not give for quiet, absolute quiet, when everything should be still, and the whirring wheels of care should cease to revolve for at least a little while?

I sometimes propose to myself to wait upon God and be still. Alas! There is the bell! Who is this? Somebody that will chatter for a quarter of an hour about nothing! Well, that intruder has gone; let us pray. We are on our knees. What is this? A telegram! One is half frightened at the very sight of it: it is opened, and it calls you away to matters which are the reverse of quieting. Where is stillness to be had? The only prescription I can give is this promise: "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." If you can get with God, you will then escape from men, even though you have to live among them. If you can baptize your spirit into the great deeps of Godhead, if you can take a plunge into the fathomless love of the covenant, if you can rise to commune with God, and speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend, then will he be unto you as a little sanctuary, and you shall enjoy that solemn silence of the soul which hath music in it like the eternal harmonies. The presence of the Lord will be as a calm hand for that fevered brow, and a pillow for that burdened head. Use your God in this way, for so he presents himself to you.

The sanctuary was *a place of mercy*. When the high-priest entered within the veil, he passed into the throne-room of mercy. The blood had been sprinkled there, and man might draw near to the God of mercy. A light was shining—a light of love and mercy, between the wings of the cherubim. Those angelic forms were ministers of mercy, attendants upon the Lord of grace. Before the high-priest stood the mercy-seat. That was the name of the cover of the sacred ark of the covenant. On that mercy-seat there was the shechinah, which symbolized the presence of a merciful God. Of that mercy-seat the Lord had said, "There will I meet with you." The holy place was a house of mercy. God was not there in power to destroy, nor in subtle wisdom to discover folly: he was there in mercy, waiting to forgive. Now, dear friends, God says, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary," that is to say, an accessible throne of mercy, an accessible palace of mercy. When men have no mercy on you, go to God. When you have no

mercy on yourself—and sometimes you have not—run away to God. Draw near to him, and he will be to you as a little sanctuary.

The sanctuary was the house of mercy, and hence, *a place of condescension*—"a little sanctuary." Brethren, to suit our needs the blessings of grace must be given in little forms. What are we great in at all except in sin? We hear of "great men." O friends, a great man! Does not the term make you laugh? Did you ever hear of a great ant, or a great emmet, or a great nothing? And that is all that the greatest of us can ever be. Our degrees and ranks are only shades of littleness; that is all. When the Lord communes with the greatest of men, he must become little to speak with him.

I cannot convey to you quite what I see to be the meaning of this little sanctuary, laying the stress upon the adjective "little." If you are talking of anything that is very dear, the tendency is always to call it "little." The affectionate terms of language are frequently diminutives. One never says, "My dear great wife," but we are apt to say, "My dear little wife." We speak thus of things which are not "little" really, but we use the word as a term of affection. To speak very simply, there is a cosiness about a little thing which we miss in that which is on a large scale. We say, "Well, I did so enjoy that little prayer-meeting; but when it grew so much in numbers I seemed lost in it." It is to me so marvellous that I hardly dare to say what I mean; but when the Lord brings himself down to our capacity he is greatly dear to us, and he would have us feel at home with him, comfortable with him. When he becomes to us "as a little sanctuary," and we are able to compass his mercy to ourselves, and perceive its adaptation to our little trials and little difficulties, then we feel ourselves at home with him, and he is most dear to us. O thou blessed God, thou art so great, that thou must, as it were, belittle thyself to manifest thyself to me; how I love and adore thee that thou wilt deign to do this! Glory be to thy great name, though the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, yet thou dwellest in the temple of my poor heart!

Dear brethren, the sanctuary was only a little place. But then, if it had been ever so great—if it had been as spacious as this whole island, and had been shut in to be the house of God—would it have been a house fitted to contain the infinite God? If you take the arch of heaven as a roof, and floor it with the sea, or if you soar into still more boundless space, is that a house fit for him who filleth all immensity? When Jehovah makes himself little enough to be in the least comprehended by us, the descent is immeasurable. It is nothing more to him to come down to count the hairs of our head than to bow in the infinity of his mercy to take an interest in our littlenesses.

Go a stage further. That sanctuary, of which we read in the Old Testament, was not only a place of great stillness, great mercy, and great condescension but it was *a place of great holiness*. "Holiness becometh thy house." This applied to the whole temple, but the inner shrine was called "sanctum sanctorum"—the Holy of Holies, for so the Hebrews make a superlative. It was the holiest place that could be. The world is an unholy place, and at times it is most grievously so. You mix up with people who defile you; how can you help it? Your

daily business calls you to see and hear many things which are defiling. When these things are more than ordinarily glaring, you say to yourself, "Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness, that I might get away from the very sight of men!" I was with a mountain-climbing friend some time ago, and being thirsty, I drank some water from a fountain by the roadside. When I held the cup to my companion, he refused it, saying, "I don't drink that." I said, "Why don't you drink it?" He answered, "I wait till I have climbed up into the mountains, where mortal men never pollute the streams, and then I drink. I like drinking of fountains at which none but birds sip: where the stream pours forth from God's hand pure as crystal." Alas! I cannot climb with my Alpine friend as to material things; but what a blessed thing it is to get right away from man, and drink of the river of God which is full of water, and know the joys of his own right hand, which are for evermore! What bliss to enter into the Holy of Holies! Now, you cannot do that by getting into a cell, or by shutting yourselves up in your room; but you can enter the most holy place by communion with God. Here is the promise; the text means this—"I will be to them as a little sanctuary—a little Holy of Holies. I will put them into myself as into the most holy place, and there will I hide them. In the secret of my tabernacle will I hide them. I will set them up upon a rock." Away from the unholiness of your own hearts, and the unholiness of those about you, get to your God, and hide yourselves in him.

Again, we may regard the sanctuary as *a place of cleansing*. That may be gathered from the other rendering of my text. "I will be unto them a little sanctification." God is the sanctification of his people: he cleanses them from daily defilements, and is himself their righteousness. Those that come to God shall find in him sanctification for the daily acts of life, cleansing from ordinary as well as extraordinary transgression. We want not only the great blood-washing, but also the lesser washing of the feet with water; and the Lord himself will give us this blessing. Did not Jesus take a towel, and gird himself for this very purpose?

Lastly, God will be to us *a place of communion and of revelation*. In the Holy of Holies God spoke with man, on that one day in the year, in a wondrous manner; and he that had been there, and came forth alive, came out to bless the congregation. Every day of the year the teaching of the sanctuary was that in God there was everything his people wanted. In the holy place was the shechinah light, and "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." "The Lord is my light and my salvation." In the holy place were the cherubim: God has legions of angels at his bidding, waiting to bless his people. In the holy place was the ark: God is to us the ark of the covenant. He has entered into covenant with man, towards us he has a throne of grace, and there he meets us, even in Christ Jesus, who is our propitiation.

Within that ark there were three things: the rod of Aaron, that divine work of Christ which always buds; the pot of manna, the emblem and token of the living bread whereon his people feed; and the tablets of the law unbroken, in all their splendour, whereby the

saints are justified. O brethren, if you want anything, if you want everything, go to God for it! He will be to you as a little sanctuary; that is to say, he will bring to you everything which was inside that holy place. Though but one piece of furniture, yet that ark of the covenant did really contain in itself, and round about it, all that the heirs of God can ever need while in this wilderness. Let this be a joy to you this day. Do not rely upon the creature. "All men are liars," said David; and he was not far out. Broken cisterns abound on all sides; why waste your time on them? Get you straight away to your Creator, and find your all in him. If this day you are wrapped up in the things that are seen and temporal, may God deliver you therefrom, for all these things will melt as you hold them in your hand! The joys of this life are like the ice palace of Montreal, which is fair to look upon while the winter lasts, but it all dissolves as the spring comes on. All things round about us here are myths and dreams. This is the land of fancies and of shadows. Pray God to get you out of them, and that you may find in him your sanctuary, and indeed all that you want.

If at this time you have lost many of the comforts of this life, and seem bereaved of friends, then find in God your "little sanctuary." Go home to your chamber with holy faith and humble love, and take him to be your all in all, and he will be all in all to you. Pray after this fashion—"O Lord, so work in me by thy Spirit that I may find thee in all things, and all things in thee!"

The Lord has ways of weaning us from the visible and the tangible, and bringing us to live upon the invisible and the real, in order to prepare us for that next stage, that better life, that higher place, where we shall really deal with eternal things only. God blows out our candles, and makes us find our light in him, to prepare us for that place in which they need no candle, for the glory of God is their light; and where, strange to tell, they have no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. The holy leads to the holiest: living upon God here leads to living with God hereafter. Oh, that God would gradually lift us up above all the outward, above all the visible, and bring us more and more into the inward and unseen! If you do not know anything about this, ask the Lord to teach you this riddle; and if you do know it, ask him to keep you to the life and walk of faith, and never may you be tempted to quit it for the way of sight and feeling. For Christ's sake we ask it. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel xi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—196, 198, 708.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SECRET OF POWER IN PRAYER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 8TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."—John xv. 7.

THE gifts of grace are not enjoyed all at once by believers. Coming unto Christ, we are saved by a true union with him; but it is by abiding in that union that we further receive the purity, the joy, the power, the blessedness, which are stored up in him for his people. See how our Lord states this when he speaks to the believing Jews in the eighth chapter of this gospel, at the thirty-first and thirty-second verses:—"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." We do not know all the truth at once: we learn it by abiding in Jesus. Perseverance in grace is an educational process by which we learn the truth fully. The emancipating power of that truth is also gradually perceived and enjoyed. "The truth shall make you free." One bond after another snaps, and we are free indeed. You that are young beginners in the divine life may be cheered to know that there is something better still for you: you have not yet received the full recompense of your faith. As your hymn puts it—"It is better on before." You shall have happier views of heavenly things as you climb the hill of spiritual experience. As you abide in Christ you shall have firmer confidence, richer joy, greater stability, more communion with Jesus, and greater delight in the Lord your God. Infancy is beset with many evils from which manhood is exempt: it is the same in the spiritual as in the natural world.

There are these degrees of attainment among believers, and the Saviour here incites us to reach a high position by mentioning a certain privilege which is not for all who say that they are in Christ, but for those only who are *abiders* in him. Every believer should be an abider, but many have hardly earned the name as yet. Jesus says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." You have to live with Christ to know him, and the longer you live with him the more will you admire and adore him; yes, and the more will you receive from him, even

grace for grace. Truly he is a blessed Christ to one who is but a month old in grace; but these babes can hardly tell what a precious Jesus he is to those whose acquaintance with him covers well-nigh half a century! Jesus, in the esteem of abiding believers, grows sweeter and dearer, fairer and more lovely, day by day. Not that he improves in himself, for he is perfect; but that as we increase in our knowledge of him, we appreciate more thoroughly his matchless excellences. How glowingly do his old acquaintances exclaim, "Yea, he is altogether lovely"! Oh, that we may continue to grow up into him in all things who is our head, that we thus may prize him more and more!

I call your earnest attention to our text, begging you to consider with me three questions. First, *what is this special blessing?* "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Secondly, *how is this special blessing obtained?* "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." Then, thirdly, *why is it obtained in this way?* There must be a reason for the conditions laid down as needful to obtaining the promised power in prayer. Oh, that the anointing of the Holy Spirit which abideth on us may now make this subject very profitable to us!

I. What is this special blessing? Let us read the verse again. Jesus says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Observe that our Lord had been warning us that, severed from him, we can do nothing, and, therefore, we might naturally have expected that he would now show us how we can do all spiritual acts. But the text does not run as we should have expected it to run. The Lord Jesus does not say, "Without me ye can do nothing, but, if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall do all spiritual and gracious things." He does not now speak of what they should themselves be enabled to do, but of what should be done unto them: "it shall be done unto you." He says not, "Strength shall be given you sufficient for all those holy doings of which you are incapable apart from me." That would have been true enough, and it is the truth which we looked for here; but our most wise Lord improves upon all parallelisms of speech, and improves upon all expectancies of heart, and says something better still. He does not say, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall do spiritual things"; but, "ye shall ask." By prayer you shall be enabled to do; but before all attempts to do, "Ye shall ask." The choice privilege here given is a mighty prevailing prayerfulness. Power in prayer is very much the gauge of our spiritual condition; and when that is secured to us in a high degree, we are favoured as to all other matters.

One of the first results, then, of our abiding union with Christ will be *the certain exercise of prayer:* "Ye shall ask." If others neither seek, nor knock, nor ask, ye, at any rate, shall do so. Those who keep away from Jesus do not pray. Those in whom communion with Christ is suspended feel as if they could not pray; but Jesus says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask." Prayer comes spontaneously from those who abide in Jesus, even as certain oriental trees, without pressure, shed their fragrant gums. Prayer is

the natural outgushing of a soul in communion with Jesus. Just as the leaf and the fruit will come out of the vine-branch without any conscious effort on the part of the branch, but simply because of its living union with the stem, so prayer buds, and blossoms, and fruits out of souls abiding in Jesus. As stars shine, so do abiders pray. It is their use and their second nature. They do not say to themselves, "Now it is the time for us to get to our task and pray." No, they pray as wise men eat, namely, when the desire for it is upon them. They do not cry out as under bondage, "At this time I ought to be in prayer, but I do not feel like it. What a weariness it is!" but they have a glad errand at the mercy-seat, and they are rejoiced to go upon it. Hearts abiding in Christ send forth supplications as fires send out flames and sparks. Souls abiding in Jesus open the day with prayer; prayer surrounds them as an atmosphere all day long; at night they fall asleep praying. I have known them even dream a prayer, and, at any rate, they are able joyfully to say, "When I awake, I am still with thee." Habitual asking comes out of abiding in Christ. You will not need urging to prayer when you are abiding with Jesus: he says, "Ye shall ask"; and, depend upon it, you will.

You shall also feel most powerfully *the necessity of prayer*. Your great need of prayer will be vividly seen. Do I hear you say—"What! When we abide in Christ, and his words abide in us, have we not already attained?" Far are we, then, from being satisfied with ourselves; it is then that we feel more than ever that we must ask for more grace. He that knows Christ best, knows his own necessities best. He that is most conscious of life in Christ, is also most convinced of his own death apart from Christ. He who most clearly discerns the perfect character of Jesus, will be most urgent in prayer for grace to grow like him. The more I see to be in my Lord, the more I desire to obtain from him, since I know that all that is in him is put there on purpose that I may receive it. "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." It is just in proportion as we are linked to Christ's fulness that we feel the necessity of drawing from it by constant prayer. Nobody needs to prove to an abider in Christ the doctrine of prayer, for we enjoy the thing itself. Prayer is now as much a necessity of our spiritual life as breath is of our natural life: we cannot live without asking favours of the Lord. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye *shall* ask": and ye shall not wish to cease from asking. He hath said, "Seek ye my face," and your heart will answer, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

Note next, that the fruit of our abiding is not only the exercise of prayer, and a sense of the necessity of prayer, but it includes *liberty in prayer*: "Ye shall ask what ye will." Have you not been on your knees at times without power to pray? Have you not felt that you could not plead as you desired? You wanted to pray, but the waters were frozen up, and would not flow. You said, mournfully, "I am shut up, and cannot come forth." The will was present, but not the freedom to present that will in prayer. Do you, then, desire liberty in prayer, so that you may speak with God as a man speaketh with his friend? Here is the way to it: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." I do not mean that you will

gain liberty as to mere fluency of utterance, for that is a very inferior gift. Fluency is a questionable endowment, especially when it is not attended with weight of thought and depth of feeling. Some brethren pray by the yard; but true prayer is measured by weight, and not by length. A single groan before God may have more fulness of prayer in it than a fine oration of great length. He that dwells with God in Christ Jesus, he is the man whose steps are enlarged in intercession. He comes boldly because he abides at the throne. He sees the golden sceptre stretched out, and hears the King saying, "Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee." It is the man who abides in conscious union with his Lord who has freedom of access in prayer. Well may he come to Christ readily, for he is in Christ, and abides in him. Attempt not to seize this holy liberty by excitement, or presumption: there is but one way of really gaining it, and here it is—"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." By this means alone shall you be enabled to open your mouth wide, that God may fill it. Thus shall you become Israels, and as princes have power with God.

This is not all: the favoured man has the privilege of *successful prayer*. "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." You may not do it, but it shall be done unto you. You long to bear fruit: ask, and it shall be done unto you. Look at the vine branch. It simply remains in the vine, and by remaining in the vine the fruit comes from it; it is done unto it. Brother in Christ, the purport of your being, its one object and design, is to bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father: to gain this end you must abide in Christ, as the branch abides in the vine. This is the method by which your prayer for fruitfulness will become successful, "it shall be done unto you." Concerning this matter, "you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." You shall have wonderful prevalence with God in prayer, insomuch that before you call he will answer, and while you are yet speaking he will hear. "The desire of the righteous shall be granted." To the same effect is the other text: "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." There is a great breadth in this text, "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." The Lord gives the abider *carte blanche*. He puts into his hand a signed cheque, and permits him to fill it up as he wills.

Does the text mean what it says? I never knew my Lord to say anything he did not mean. I am sure that he may sometimes mean more than we understand him to say, but he never means less. Mind you, he does not say to all men, "I will give you whatever you ask." Oh no, that would be an unkind kindness: but he speaks to his disciples, and says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." It is to a certain class of men who have already received great grace at his hands—it is to them he commits this marvellous power of prayer. O my dear friends, if I may covet earnestly one thing above every other, it is this; that I may be able to ask what I will of the Lord, and have it. The prevailer in prayer is the man to preach successfully, for he may well prevail with man for God when he has already prevailed with God for

men. This is the man to face the difficulties of business life; for what can baffle him when he can take all to God in prayer? One such man as this, or one such woman as this in a church, is worth ten thousand of us common people. In these we find the peerage of the skies. In these are the men in whom is fulfilled God's purpose concerning man, whom he made to have dominion over all the works of his hands. The stamp of sovereignty is on the brows of these men: they shape the history of nations, they guide the current of events through their power on high. We see Jesus with all things put under him by the divine purpose, and as we rise into that image, we also are clothed with dominion, and are made kings and priests unto God. Behold Elijah, with the keys of the rain swinging at his girdle: he shuts or opens the windows of heaven! There are such men still alive. Aspire to be such men and women, I beseech you, that to you the text may be fulfilled. "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

The text seems to imply that, if we reach this point of privilege, this gift shall be a perpetuity: "Ye shall ask," ye shall always ask; ye shall never get beyond asking, but ye shall ask successfully, for "ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Here we have the gift of *continual prayer*. Not for the week of prayer, not during a month's conference, nor upon a few special occasions shall ye pray prevailingly; but ye shall possess this power with God so long as you abide in Christ, and his words abide in you. God will put his omnipotence at your disposal: he will put forth his Godhead to fulfil the desires which his own Spirit has inwrought in you. I wish I could make this jewel glitter before the eyes of all the saints till they cried out, "Oh that we had it!" This power in prayer is like the sword of Goliath: wisely may every David say—"There is none like it; give it me." This weapon of all-prayer beats the enemy, and, at the same time, enriches its possessor with all the wealth of God. How can he lack anything to whom the Lord hath said, "Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee"? Oh, come, let us seek this boon. Listen, and learn the way. Follow me, while by the light of the text I point out the path. May the Lord lead us in it by his Holy Spirit!

II. The privilege of mighty prayerfulness—HOW IS IT TO BE OBTAINED? The answer is, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." Here are the two feet by which we climb to power with God in prayer.

Beloved, the first line tells us that we are to *abide in Christ Jesus our Lord*. It is taken for granted that we are already in him. May it be taken for granted in your case, dear hearer? If so, you are to abide where you are. As believers we are to remain tenaciously clinging to Jesus, livingly knit to Jesus. We are to abide in him, by always trusting him, and him only, with the same simple faith which joined us to him at the first. We must never admit any other thing or person into our heart's confidence as our hope of salvation, but rest alone in Jesus as we received him at the first. His Godhead, his manhood, his life, his death, his resurrection, his glory at the right hand of the Father—in a word, himself must be our heart's sole

reliance. This is absolutely essential. A temporary faith will not save: an abiding faith is needful.

But abiding in the Lord Jesus does not only mean trusting in him; it includes our yielding ourselves up to him to receive his life, and to let that life work out its results in us. We live *in* him, *by* him, *for* him, *to* him, when we abide in him. We feel that all our separate life has gone: for "ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ." We are nothing if we get away from Jesus; we should then be branches withered, and fit only to be cast into the fire. We have no reason for existence except that which we find in Christ; and what a marvellous reason that is! The vine needs the branch as truly as the branch needs the vine. No vine ever bore any fruit except upon its branches. Truly it bears all the branches, and so bears all the fruit; but yet it is by the branch that the vine displays its fruitfulness. Thus are abiding believers needful to the fulfilment of their Lord's design. Wonderful thing to say; but the saints are needful to their Saviour! The church is his body; the fulness of him that filleth all in all. I want you to recognize this, that you may see your blessed responsibility, your practical obligation to bring forth fruit, that the Lord Jesus may be glorified in you. Abide in him. Never remove from your consecration to his honour and glory. Never dream of being your own master. Be not the servant of men, but abide in Christ. Let him be the object, as well as the source, of your existence. Oh, if you get there, and stop there in perpetual communion with your Lord, you will soon realize a joy, a delight, a power in prayer, such as you never knew before. There are times when we are conscious that we are in Christ, and we know our fellowship with him; and oh, the joy and the peace which we drink from this cup! Let us abide there. "Abide in me," saith Jesus. You are not to come and go, but to abide. Let that blessed sinking of yourself into his life, the spending of all your powers for Jesus, and the firm faith of your union with him remain in you evermore. Oh, that we might attain to this by the Holy Ghost!

As if to help us to understand this, our gracious Lord has given us a delightful parable. Let us look through this discourse of the vine and its branches. Jesus says, "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it." Take care that you *abide in Christ when you are being purged.* "Oh," says one, "I thought I was a Christian; but, alas! I have more troubles than ever: men ridicule me, the devil tempts me, and my business affairs go wrong." Brother, if you are to have power in prayer you must take care that you abide in Christ when the sharp knife is cutting everything away. Endure trial, and never dream of giving up your faith because of it. Say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Your Lord warned you when you first came into the vine that you would have to be purged and cut closely; and if you are now feeling the purging process, you must not think that some strange thing hath happened unto you. Rebel not because of anything you may have to suffer from the dear hand of your heavenly Father, who is the husbandman of the vineyard. No, but cling to Jesus all the more closely. Say, "Cut, Lord, cut to the quick if thou wilt; but I will cling to thee. To whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Yes, cling to Jesus when the

purging knife is in his hand, and so "shall ye ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Take care, also, that *when the purging operation has been carried out you still cleave to your Lord.* Notice the third verse: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you." Abide after cleansing where you were before cleansing. When you are sanctified, abide where you were when first justified. When you see the work of the Spirit increasing in you, do not let the devil tempt you to boast that now you are somebody, and need not come to Jesus as a poor sinner, and rest in his precious blood alone for salvation. Abide still in Jesus. As you kept to him when the knife cut you, keep to him now that the tender grapes begin to form. Do not say to yourself, "What a fruitful branch I am! How greatly I adorn the vine! Now I am full of vigour!" You are nothing and nobody. Only as you abide in Christ are you one whit better than the waste wood which is burned in the fire. "But do we not make progress?" Yes, we grow, but we abide: we never go an inch further, we abide in him; or, if not, we are cast forth, and are withered. Our whole hope lies in Jesus at our best times as well as at our worst. Jesus saith, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you."

Abide in him *as to all your fruitfulness.* "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "Here, then, I have something to do," cries one. Certainly you have, but not apart from Jesus. The branch has to bear fruit; but if the branch imagines that it is going to produce a cluster, or even a grape, out of itself alone, it is utterly mistaken. The fruit of the branch must come forth of the stem. Your work for Christ must be Christ's work in you, or else it will be good for nothing. I pray you, see to this. Your Sunday-school teaching, your preaching, or whatever you do, must be done in Christ Jesus. Not by your natural talent can you win souls, nor by plans of your own inventing can you save men. Beware of home-made schemes. Do for Jesus what Jesus bids you do. Remember that our work for Christ, as we call it, must be Christ's work first, if it is to be accepted of him. Abide in him as to your fruit-bearing.

Yea, abide in him *as to your very life.* Do not say, "I have been a Christian man now twenty or thirty years, I can do without continued dependence upon Christ." No, you could not do without him if you were as old as Methuselah. Your very being as a Christian depends upon your still clinging, still trusting, still depending; and this he must give you, for it all comes from him, and him alone. To sum it all up, if you want that splendid power in prayer of which I spoke just now, you must remain in loving, living, lasting, conscious, practical, abiding union with the Lord Jesus Christ; and if you get to that by divine grace, then you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

But there is a second qualification mentioned in the text, and you must not forget it—"*and my words abide in you.*" How important, then, are Christ's words! He said in the fourth verse, "Abide in me, and I in you," and now as a parallel to this it is, "If ye abide in me,

and my words abide in you." What, then, are Christ's words and himself identical? Yes, practically so. Some talk about Christ being the Master, but as to doctrine, they do not care what his word declares. So long as their hearts are right towards his person they claim liberty of thought. Ay, but this is a mere subterfuge. We cannot separate Christ from the Word; for, in the first place, he is the Word; and, in the next place, how dare we call him Master and Lord and do not the things which he says, and reject the truth which he teaches? We must obey his precepts or he will not accept us as disciples. Especially that precept of love which is the essence of all his words. We must love God and our brethren; yea, we must cherish love to all men, and seek their good. Anger and malice must be far from us. We must walk even as he walked. If Christ's words abide not in thee, both as to belief and practice, thou art not in Christ. Christ and his gospel and his commands are one. If thou wilt not have Christ and his words, neither will he have thee nor thy words; but thou shalt ask in vain, thou shalt by-and-by give up asking, thou shalt become as a withered branch. Beloved, I am persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak.

Oh for grace to pass through these two-leaved gates, these two golden doors! "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." Push through the two, and enter into this large room—"Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

III. It is my last work to try to show WHY THIS PRIVILEGE SHOULD BE SO OBTAINED. This extraordinary power of prayer, why is it given to those who abide in Christ? May what I have to say encourage you to make the glorious attempt to win this pearl of great price! Why is it, that by abiding in Christ, and having his words abide in us, we get to this liberty and prevalence in prayer?

I answer, first, *because of the fulness of Christ.* You may very well ask what you will when you abide in Christ, because whatsoever you may require is already lodged in him. Good Bishop Hall worked out this thought in a famous passage. I will give you the substance of it. Do you desire the grace of the Spirit? Go to your Lord's anointing. Do you seek holiness? Go to his example. Do you desire pardon of sin? Look to his blood. Do you need mortification of sin? Look to his crucifixion. Do you need to be buried to the world? Go to his tomb. Do you want to feel the fulness of a heavenly life? Behold his resurrection. Would you rise above the world? Mark his ascension. Would you contemplate heavenly things? Remember his session at the right hand of God, and know that he "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places." I see clearly enough why the branch gets all it wants while it abides in the stem, since all it wants is already in the stem, and is placed there for the sake of the branch. What does the branch want more than the stem can give it? If it did want more it could not get it; for it has no other means of living but by sucking its life out of the stem. O my precious Lord, if I want anything which is not in thee, I desire always to be without it. I desire to be denied a wish which wanders outside of thyself. But if the supply of my desire is already in thee for me, why should I go elsewhere? Thou art my all; where else should I

look? Beloved, "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," and the good pleasure of the Father is our good pleasure also: we are glad to draw everything from Jesus. We feel sure that, ask what we will, we shall have it, since he has it ready for us.

The next reason for this is, *the richness of the Word of God.* Catch this thought, "If my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." The best praying man is the man who is most believingly familiar with the promises of God. After all, prayer is nothing but taking God's promises to him, and saying to him, "Do as thou hast said." Prayer is the promise utilized. A prayer which is not based on a promise has no true foundation. If I go to the bank without a cheque I need not expect to get money; it is the "order to pay" which is my power inside the bank, and my warrant for expecting to receive. You that have Christ's words abiding in you are equipped with those things which the Lord regards with attention. If the Word of God abideth in you, you are the man that can pray, because you meet the great God with his own words, and thus overcome omnipotence with omnipotence. You put your finger down upon the very lines, and say, "Do as thou hast said." This is the best praying in all the world. O beloved, be filled with God's Word. Study what Jesus has said, what the Holy Ghost has left on record in this divinely-inspired Book, and in proportion as you feed on the Word, and are filled with the Word, and retain the Word in your faith, and obey the Word in your life—in that proportion you will be a master-man in the art of prayer. You have acquired skill as a wrestler with the covenant angel in proportion as you can plead the promises of your faithful God. Be well instructed in the doctrines of grace, and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, that you may know how to prevail at the throne of grace. Abiding in Christ, and his words abiding in you, are like the right hand and the left hand of Moses, which were held up in prayer, so that Amalek was smitten, Israel was delivered, and God was glorified.

Let us go a little further: you still may say you do not quite see why a man who abides in Christ, and in whom Christ's words abide, should be allowed to ask whatever he wills, and it shall be done unto him. I answer you again: it is so, because *in such a man as that there is a predominance of grace which causes him to have a renewed will, which is according to the will of God.* Suppose a man of God is in prayer, and he thinks that such and such a thing is desirable, yet he remembers that he is nothing but a babe in the presence of his all-wise Father, and so he bows his will, and asks as a favour to be taught what to will. Though God bids him ask what he wills, he shrinks and cries, "My Lord, here is a request which I am not quite clear about. As far as I can judge, it is a desirable thing, and I will it; but, Lord, I am not fit to judge for myself, and therefore I pray thee, give not as I will, but as thou wilt." Do you not see that, when we are in such a condition as this, our real will is God's will. Deep down in our hearts we will only that which the Lord himself wills; and what is this but to ask what we will, and it is done to us? It becomes safe for God to say to the sanctified soul, "Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee." The heavenly instincts of that man lead him

right; the grace that is within his soul thrusts down all covetous lustings and foul desires, and his will is the actual shadow of God's will. The spiritual life is master in him, and so his aspirations are holy, heavenly, Godlike. He has been made a partaker of the divine nature; and as a son is like his father, so now in desire and will he is one with his God. As the echo answers to the voice, so does the renewed heart echo the mind of the Lord. Our desires are reflected beams of the divine will: ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be even so.

You clearly see that the holy God cannot pick up a common man in the street, and say to him, "I will give you whatsoever you will." What would he ask for? He would ask for a good drink, or permission to enjoy himself in evil lust. It would be very unsafe to trust the most of men with this permit. But when the Lord has taken a man, and has new-made him, has quickened him into newness of life, and has formed him in the image of his dear Son, then he can trust him! Behold, the great Father treats us in our measure as he treats his Firstborn. Jesus could say, "I know that thou hearest me always"; and the Lord is educating us to the selfsame assurance. We can say with one of old, "My God will hear me." Do not your mouths water for this privilege of prevailing prayer? Do not your hearts long to get at this? It is by the way of holiness, it is by the way of union to Christ, it is by the way of a permanent abiding in him, and an obedient holding fast of his truth, that you are to come to this privilege. Behold the only safe and true way. When once that way is really trodden, it is a most sure and effectual way of gaining substantial power in prayer.

I have not quite done. A man will succeed in prayer *when his faith is strong;* and this is the case with those who abide in Jesus. It is faith that prevails in prayer. The real eloquence of prayer is a believing desire. "All things are possible to him that believeth." A man abiding in Christ with Christ's words abiding in him, is eminently a believer, and consequently eminently successful in prayer. He has strong faith indeed, for his faith has brought him into vital contact with Christ, and he is therefore at the source of every blessing, and may drink to his full at the well itself.

Such a man, once more, will also possess *the indwelling of the Spirit of God.* If we abide in Christ, and his words abide in us, then the Holy Ghost has come and taken up his residence in us; and what better help in prayer can we have? Is it not a wonderful thing that the Holy Ghost himself maketh intercession in the saints according to the will of God? He "maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." What man knoweth the mind of a man save the spirit of a man? The Spirit of God knows the mind of God, and he works in us to will what God wills, so that a believing man's prayer is God's purpose reflected in the soul as in a mirror. The eternal decrees of God project their shadows over the hearts of godly men in the form of prayer. What God intends to do he tells unto his servants by inclining them to ask him to do what he himself is resolved to do. God says, "I will do this and that"; but then he adds, "For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it

for them." How clear it is that if we abide in Christ, and his words abide in us, we may ask what we will! For we shall only ask what the Spirit of God moves us to ask; and it were impossible that God the Holy Ghost and God the Father should be at cross-purposes with one another. What the one prompts us to ask, the other has assuredly determined to bestow.

I struck out a line just now to which I must return for a single moment. Beloved, do you not know that when we abide in Christ, and his words abide in us, the Father looks upon us with the same eye with which he looks upon his dear Son? Christ is the vine, and the vine includes the branches. The branches are a part of the vine. God, therefore, looks upon us as part of Christ—members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Such is the Father's love to Jesus that he denies him nothing. He was obedient to death, even the death of the cross; therefore doth his Father love him, as the God-man Mediator, and he will grant him all his petitions. And is it so, that when you and I are in real union to Christ, the Lord God looks upon us in the same way as he looks on Jesus, and says to us, "I will deny you nothing; ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you"? So do I understand the text.

I call your attention to the fact that in that fifteenth chapter, the ninth verse, which I did not read this morning, runs thus:—"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." The same love which God gives to his Son, the Son gives to us; and therefore we are dwellers in the love of the Father and of the Son. How can our prayers be rejected? Will not infinite love have respect unto our petitions? O dear brother in Christ, if thy prayers speed not at the throne, suspect that there is some sin that hinders them: thy Father's love sees a necessity for chastening thee this way. If thou dost not abide in Christ, how canst thou hope to pray successfully? If thou dost pick and choose his words, and doubt this, and doubt that, how canst thou hope to speed at the throne? If thou art wilfully disobedient to any one of his words, will not this account for failure in prayer? But abide thou in Christ, and take fast hold upon his words, and be altogether his disciple, then shalt thou be heard of him. Sitting at Jesus' feet, hearing his words, thou mayest lift up thine eyes to his dear face, and say, "My Lord, hear me now"; and he will answer thee graciously: he will say unto thee, "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee. Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee." Oh for power at the mercy-seat!

Beloved friends, do not hear this sermon, and then go away and forget it. Do try to reach this place of boundless influence. What a church we should be, if you were all mighty in prayer! Dear children of God, do you want to be half starved? Beloved brethren, do you desire to be poor, little, puny, drivelling children, who will never grow into men? I pray you, aspire to be strong in the Lord, and to enjoy this exceedingly high privilege. What an army would you be if you all had this power with God in prayer! It is within your reach, ye children of God! Only abide in Christ, and let his words abide in you, and then this special privilege will be yours. These are not

irksome duties, but they are in themselves a joy. Go in for them with your whole heart, and then you shall get this added to you, that you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

Unhappily, to a portion of this congregation my text says nothing at all; for some of you are not even in Christ, and therefore you cannot abide in him. O sirs, what shall I say to you? You seem to me to miss a very heaven even now. If there were no hell hereafter, it is hell enough not to know Christ now, not to know what it is to prevail with God in prayer, not to know the choice privilege of abiding in him, and his words abiding in you. Your first matter is that you believe in Jesus Christ to the saving of your souls, yielding your souls to his cleansing, your lives to his government. God hath sent him forth as a Saviour, accept him. Receive him as your Teacher; yield yourself up to him as your Master. May his gracious Spirit come and do this work upon you now; and then, after this, but not before, you may aspire to this honour. First of all—"Ye must be born again." I cannot say to you as you are now, "Grow," because you will only grow a bigger sinner. However much you may be developed, you will only develop what is in you: and that is, the heir of wrath will become more and more the child of evil. You must be made anew in Christ: there must be an absolute change, a reversal of all the currents of nature, a making you a new creature in Christ Jesus; and then you may aspire to abide in Christ, and let his words abide in you, and the consequent prevalence with God in prayer shall be yours.

Gracious Lord, help us this morning. Poor creatures as we are, we can only lie at thy feet. Come thyself, and uplift us to thyself, for thy mercy's sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xv. 1—8; 1 John ii.

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YOUNG MAN, IS THIS FOR YOU?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 15TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judæa, and throughout all the region round about."—Luke vii. 11—17.

BEHOLD, dear brethren, the overflowing, ever-flowing power of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had wrought a great work upon the centurion's servant, and now, only a day after, he raises the dead. "It came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain." Day unto day uttereth speech concerning his deeds of goodness. Did he save your friend yesterday? His fulness is the same; if you seek him, his love and grace will flow to you to-day. He blesses this day, and he blesses the day after. Never is our divine Lord compelled to pause until he has recruited his resources; but virtue goeth out of him for ever. These thousands of years have not diminished the aboundings of his power to bless.

Behold, also, the readiness and naturalness of the outgoings of his life-giving power. Our Saviour was journeying, and he works miracles while on the road: "He went into a city called Nain." It was incidentally, some would say accidentally, that he met the funeral procession; but at once he restored to life this dead young man. Our blessed Lord was not standing still, as one professionally called in; he does not seem to have come to Nain at any one's request for the display of his love; but he was passing through the gate into the city, for some reason which is not recorded. See, my brethren, how the Lord Jesus is always ready to save! He healed the woman who touched him in the throng when he was on the road to quite another person's house. The mere spillings and droppings of the Lord's cup of grace are marvellous. Here he gives life to the dead when he is *en route;* he scatters his mercy by the roadside, and anywhere and everywhere his paths drop fatness. No time, no place, can find Jesus

unwilling or unable. When Baal is on a journey, or sleepeth, his deluded worshippers cannot hope for his help; but when Jesus journeys or sleeps, a word will find him ready to conquer death, or quell the tempest.

It was a remarkable incident, this meeting of the two processions at the gates of Nain. If some one with a fine imagination could picture it, what an opportunity he would have for developing his poetical genius! I venture on no such effort. Yonder a procession descends from the city. Our spiritual eyes see death upon the pale horse coming forth from the city gate with great exultation. He has taken another captive. Upon that bier behold the spoils of the dread conqueror! Mourners by their tears confess the victory of death. Like a general riding in triumph to the Roman capitol, death bears his spoils to the tomb. What shall hinder him? Suddenly the procession is arrested by another: a company of disciples and much people are coming up the hill. We need not look at the company, but we may fix our eyes upon one who stands in the centre, a man in whom lowliness was always evident, and yet majesty was never wanting. It is the living Lord, even he who only hath immortality, and in him death has now met his destroyer. The battle is short and decisive; no blows are struck, for death has already done his utmost. With a finger the chariot of death is arrested; with a word the spoil is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive is delivered. Death flies defeated from the gates of the city, while Tabor and Hermon, which both looked down upon the scene, rejoice in the name of the Lord. This was a rehearsal upon a small scale of that which shall happen by-and-by, when those who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live: then shall the last enemy be destroyed. Only let death come into contact with him who is our life, and it is compelled to relax its hold, whatever may be the spoil which it has captured. Soon shall our Lord come in his glory, and then before the gates of the New Jerusalem we shall see the miracle at the gates of Nain multiplied a myriad times.

Thus, you see, our subject would naturally conduct us to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which is one of the foundation stones of our most holy faith. That grand truth I have often declared to you, and will do so again and again; but at this time I have selected my text for a very practical purpose, which concerns the souls of some for whom I am greatly anxious. The narrative before us records a fact, a literal fact, but the record may be used for spiritual instruction. All our Lord's miracles were intended to be parables: they were intended to instruct as well as to impress: they are sermons to the eye, just as his spoken discourses were sermons to the ear. We see here how Jesus can deal with spiritual death; and how he can impart spiritual life at his pleasure. Oh, that we may see this done this morning in the midst of this great assembly!

I. I shall ask you first, dear friends, to reflect that THE SPIRITUALLY DEAD CAUSE GREAT GRIEF TO THEIR GRACIOUS FRIENDS. If an ungodly man is favoured to have Christian relatives, he causes them much anxiety. As a natural fact, this dead young man, who was being carried out to his burial, caused his mother's heart to burst with

grief. She showed by her tears that her heart was overflowing with sorrow. The Saviour said to her, "Weep not," because he saw how deeply she was troubled. Many of my dear young friends may be deeply thankful that they have friends who are grieving over them. It is a sad thing that your conduct should grieve them; but it is a hopeful circumstance for you that you have those around you who do thus grieve. If all approved of your evil ways, you would, no doubt, continue in them, and go speedily to destruction; but it is a blessing that arresting voices do at least a little hinder you. Besides, it may yet be that our Lord will listen to the silent oratory of your mother's tears, and that this morning he may bless you for her sake. See how the evangelist puts it: "When the Lord saw *her*, he had compassion on *her*, and said unto *her*, Weep not." And then he said to the young man, "Arise."

Many young persons who are in some respects amiable and hopeful, nevertheless, being spiritually dead, *are causing great sorrow to those who love them best.* It would perhaps be honest to say that they do not intend to inflict all this sorrow; indeed, they think it quite unnecessary. Yet they are a daily burden to those whom they love. Their conduct is such that when it is thought over in the silence of their mother's chamber, she cannot help but weep. Her son went with her to the house of God when he was a boy, but now he finds his pleasure in a very different quarter. Being beyond all control now, the young man does not choose to go with his mother. She would not wish to deprive him of his liberty, but she laments that he exercises that liberty so unwisely; she mourns that he has not the inclination to hear the Word of the Lord, and become a servant of his mother's God. She had hoped that he would follow in his father's footsteps, and unite with the people of God; but he takes quite the opposite course. She has seen a good deal about him lately which has deepened her anxiety: he is forming companionships and other connections which are sadly harmful to him. He has a distaste for the quietude of home, and he has been exhibiting to his mother a spirit which wounds her. It may be that what he has said and done is not meant to be unkind; but it is very grievous to the heart which watches over him so tenderly. She sees a growing indifference to everything that is good, and an unconcealed intention to see the vicious side of life. She knows a little, and fears more, as to his present state, and she dreads that he will go from one sin to another till he ruins himself for this life and the next. O friends, it is to a gracious heart a very great grief to have an unconverted child; and yet more so if that child is a mother's boy, her only boy, and she a desolate woman, from whom her husband has been snatched away. To see spiritual death rampant in one so dear is a sore sorrow, which causes many a mother to mourn in secret, and pour out her soul before God. Many a Hannah has become a woman of a sorrowful spirit through her own child. How sad that he who should have made her the gladdest among women has filled her life with bitterness! Many a mother has had so to grieve over her son as almost to cry, "Would God he had never been born!" It is so in thousands of cases. If it be so in your case, dear friend, take home my words to yourself, and reflect upon them.

The cause of grief lies here: *we mourn that they should be in such a case.* In the story before us the mother wept because her son was dead; and we sorrow because our young friends are spiritually dead. There is a life infinitely higher than the life which quickens our material bodies; and oh that all of you knew it! You, who are unrenewed, do not know anything about this true life. Oh, how we wish you did! It seems to us a dreadful thing that you should be dead to God, dead to Christ, dead to the Holy Spirit. It is sad, indeed, that you should be dead to those divine truths which are the delight and strength of our souls; dead to those holy motives which keep us back from evil, and spur us on to virtue; dead to those sacred joys which often bring us very near the gates of heaven. We cannot look at a dead man, and feel joy in him, whoever he may be: a corpse, however delicately dressed, is a sad sight. We cannot look upon you, ye poor dead souls, without crying out, "O God, shall it always be so? Shall not these dry bones live? Wilt thou not quicken them?" The apostle speaks of one who lived in pleasure, and he said of her, "She is dead while she liveth." Numbers of persons are dead in reference to all that is truest, and noblest, and most divine; and yet in other respects they are full of life and activity. Oh, to think that they should be dead to God, and yet so full of jollity and energy! Marvel not that we grieve about them.

We also mourn because we lose the help and comfort which they ought to bring us. This widowed mother no doubt mourned her boy, not only because he was dead, but because in him she had lost her earthly stay. She must have regarded him as the staff of her age, and the comfort of her loneliness. "She was a widow": I question if anybody but a widow understands the full sorrow of that word. We may put ourselves by sympathy into the position of one who has lost her other self, the partner of her life; but the tenderest sympathy cannot fully realize the actual cleavage of bereavement, and the desolation of love's loss. "She was a widow"—the sentence sounds like a knell. Still, if the sun of her life was gone, there was a star shining; she had a boy, a dear boy, who promised her great comfort. He would, no doubt, supply her necessities, and cheer her loneliness, and in him her husband would live again, and his name would remain among the living in Israel. She could lean on him as she went to the synagogue; she would have him to come home from his work at evening, and keep the little home together, and cheer her hearth. Alas! that star is swallowed up in the darkness. He is dead, and to-day he is borne to the cemetery. It is the same spiritually with us in reference to our unconverted friends. With regard to you that are dead in sin, we feel that we miss the aid and comfort which we ought to receive from you in our service of the living God. We want fresh labourers in all sorts of places—in our Sunday-school work, our mission among the masses, and in all manner of service for the Lord we love! Ours is a gigantic burden, and we long for our sons to put their shoulders to it. We did look forward to see you grow up in the fear of God, and stand side by side with us in the great warfare against evil, and in holy labour for the Lord Jesus; but you cannot help us, for you are yourselves on the wrong side. Alas, alas! you hinder us by causing the world to

say, "See how those young men are acting!" We have to spend thought, and prayer, and effort over you which might usefully have gone forth for others. Our care for yonder great dark world which lies all around us is very pressing, but you do not share it with us: men are perishing from lack of knowledge, and you do not help us in endeavouring to enlighten them.

A further grief is that we can have no fellowship with them. The mother at Nain could have no communion with her dear son now that he was dead, for the dead know not anything. He can never speak to her, nor she to him, for he is on the bier, "a dead man carried out." O my friends, certain of you have dear ones whom you love, and they love you; but they cannot hold any spiritual communion with you, nor you with them. You never bow the knee together in private prayer, nor mingle heart with heart in the appeal of faith to God as to the cares which prowl around your home. O young man, when your mother's heart leaps for joy because of the love of Christ shed abroad in her soul, you cannot understand her joy. Her feelings are a mystery to you. If you are a dutiful son, you do not say anything disrespectful about her religion; but yet you cannot sympathize in its sorrows or its joys. Between your mother and you there is upon the best things a gulf as wide as if you were actually dead on the bier, and she stood weeping over your corpse. I remember, in the hour of overwhelming anguish when I feared that my beloved wife was about to be taken from me, how I was comforted by the loving prayers of my two dear sons: we had communion not only in our grief, but in our confidence in the living God. We knelt together and poured out our hearts unto God, and we were comforted. How I blessed God that I had in my children such sweet support! But suppose they had been ungodly young men! I should have looked in vain for holy fellowship, and for aid at the throne of grace. Alas! in many a household the mother cannot have communion with her own son or daughter on that point which is most vital and enduring, because they are spiritually dead, while she has been quickened into newness of life by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, *spiritual death soon produces manifest causes for sorrow.* In the narrative before us the time had come when her son's body must be buried. She could not wish to have that dead form longer in the home with her. It is a token to us of the terrible power of death, that it conquers love with regard to the body. Abraham loved his Sarah; but after a while he had to say to the sons of Heth, "Give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." It happens in some mournful cases that character becomes so bad that no comfort in life can be enjoyed while the erring one is within the home circle. We have known parents who have felt that they could not have their son at home, so drunken, so debauched had he become. Not always wisely, yet sometimes almost of necessity, the plan has been tried of sending the incorrigible youth to a distant colony, in the hope that when removed from pernicious influences he might do better. How seldom so deplorable an experiment succeeds! I have known mothers who could not think of their sons without feeling pangs far more bitter than those they endured at their birth. Woe, woe to him who causes such heart-break!

What an awful thing it is when love's best hopes gradually die down into despair, and loving desires at last put on mourning, and turn from prayers of hope to tears of regret! Words of admonition call forth such passion and blasphemy that prudence almost silences them. Then have we before us the dead young man carried out to his grave. A sorrowful voice sobs out, "He is given unto idols, let him alone." Am I addressing one whose life is now preying upon the tender heart of her that brought him forth? Do I speak to one whose outward conduct has at last become so avowedly wicked that he is a daily death to those who gave him life? O young man, can you bear to think of this? Are you turned to stone? I cannot yet believe that you contemplate your parents' heart-break without bitter feelings. God forbid that you should!

We also mourn because of the future of men dead in sin. This mother, whose son had already gone so far in death that he must be buried out of sight, had the further knowledge that something worse would befall him in the sepulchre to which he was being carried. It was impossible for her to think calmly of the corruption which surely follows at the heels of death. When we think of what will become of you who refuse the Lord Christ we are appalled. "After death the judgment." We could more readily go into details as to a putrid corpse than we could survey the state of a soul lost for ever. We dare not linger at the mouth of hell; but we are forced to remind you that there is a place "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." There is a place where those must abide who are driven from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. It is an unendurable thought, that you should be "cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death." I do not wonder that those who are not honest with you are afraid to tell you so, and that you try yourself to doubt it; but with the Bible in your hand, and a conscience in your bosom, you cannot but fear the worst if you remain apart from Jesus and the life he freely gives. If you continue as you are, and persevere in your sin and unbelief to the end of life, there is no help for it but that you must be condemned in the day of judgment. The most solemn declarations of the Word of God assure you that "he that believeth not shall be damned." It is heart-breaking work to think that this should be the case with any one of you. You prattled at your mother's knee, and kissed her cheek with rapturous love; why, then, will you be divided from her for ever? Your father hoped that you would take his place in the church of God; how is it that you do not even care to follow him to heaven? Remember, the day comes when "one shall be taken, and the other left." Do you renounce all hope of being with your wife, your sister, your mother, at the right hand of God? You cannot wish them to go down to hell with you; have you no desire to go to heaven with them? "Come, ye blessed," will be the voice of Jesus to those who imitated their gracious Saviour; and "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," must be the sentence upon all who refuse to be made like the Lord. Why will you take your part and lot with accursed ones?

I do not know whether you find it easy to hear me this morning.

I find it very hard to speak to you, because my lips are not able to express my heart's feelings. Oh that I had the forceful utterance of an Isaiah, or the passionate lamentations of a Jeremiah, with which to arouse your affections and your fears! Still, the Holy Spirit can use even me, and I beseech him so to do. It is enough. I am sure you see that the spiritually dead cause great grief to those of their family who are spiritually alive.

II. Now let me cheer you while I introduce the second head of my discourse, which is this: FOR SUCH GRIEF THERE IS ONLY ONE HELPER: BUT THERE IS A HELPER. This young man is taken out to be buried; but *our Lord Jesus Christ met the funeral procession.* Carefully note the "coincidences," as sceptics call them, but as we call them "providences" of Scripture." This is a fine subject for another time. Take this one case. How came it that the young man died just then? How came it that this exact hour was selected for his burial? Perhaps because it was evening; but even that might not fix the precise moment. Why did the Saviour that day arrange to travel five-and-twenty miles, so as to arrive at Nain in the evening? How came it to pass that he happened just then to be coming from a quarter which naturally led him to enter at that particular gate from which the dead would be borne? See, he ascends the hill to the little city at the same moment when the head of the procession is coming out of the gate! He meets the dead man before the place of sepulture is reached. A little later and he would have been buried; a little earlier and he would have been at home lying in the darkened room, and no one might have called the Lord's attention to him. The Lord knows how to arrange all things; his forecasts are true to the tick of the clock. I hope some great purpose is to be fulfilled this morning. I do not know why you, my friend, came in here on a day when I am discoursing on this particular subject. You did not think to come, perhaps, but here you are. And Jesus has come here too; he has come here on purpose to meet you, and quicken you to newness of life. There is no chance about it, eternal decrees have arranged it all, and we shall soon see that it is so. You being spiritually dead are met by him in whom is life eternal.

The blessed Saviour saw all at a glance. Out of that procession he singled out the chief mourner, and read her inmost heart. He was always tender to mothers. He fixed his eye on that widow; for he knew that she was such, without being informed of the fact. The dead man is her only son: he perceives all the details, and feels Nothing is hid from his infinite mind. Your mother's heart and them all intensely. O young man, Jesus knows all about you. yours are both open to him. Jesus, who is invisibly present this morning, fixes his eyes on you at this moment. He has seen the tears of those who have wept for you. He sees that some of them despair of you, and are in their great grief acting like mourners at your funeral.

Jesus saw it all, and, what was more, *entered into it all.* Oh, how we ought to love our Lord that he takes such notice of our griefs, and especially our spiritual griefs about the souls of others! You, dear teacher, want your class saved: Jesus sympathizes with you. You,

dear friend, have been very earnest to win souls. Know that in all this you are workers together with God. Jesus knows all about our travail of soul, and he is at one with us therein. Our travail is only his own travail rehearsed in us, according to our humble measure. When Jesus enters into our work it cannot fail. Enter, O Lord, into my work at this hour, I pray thee, and bless this feeble word to my hearers! I know that hundreds of believers are saying, "Amen." How this cheers me!

Our Lord proved how he entered into the sorrowful state of things by first saying to the widow, "Weep not." At this moment he says to you who are praying and agonizing for souls, "Do not despair! Sorrow not as those who are without hope! I mean to bless you. You shall yet rejoice over life given to the dead." Let us take heart and dismiss all unbelieving fear.

Our Lord then went to the bier, and just laid his finger upon it, and *they that bare it stood still of their own accord.* Our Lord has a way of making bearers stand still without a word. Perhaps to-day yonder young man is being carried further into sin by the four bearers of his natural passions, his infidelity, his bad company, and his love of strong drink. It may be that pleasure and pride, wilfulness and wickedness are bearing the four corners of the bier; but our Lord can, by his mysterious power, make the bearers stand still. Evil influences have become powerless, the man knows not how.

When they stood quite still, *there was a hush.* The disciples stood around the Lord, the mourners surrounded the widow, and the two crowds faced each other. There was a little space, and Jesus and the dead man were in the centre. The widow pushed away her veil, and gazing through her tears wondered what was coming. The Jews who came out of the city halted as the bearers had done. Hush! Hush! What will HE do? In that deep silence the Lord heard the unspoken prayers of that widow woman. I doubt not that her soul began to whisper, half in hope, and half in fear—"Oh, that he would raise my son!" At any rate, Jesus heard the flutter of the wings of desire if not of faith. Surely her eyes were speaking as she gazed on Jesus, who had so suddenly appeared. Here let us be as quiet as the scene before us. Let us be hushed for a minute, and pray God to raise dead souls at this time. (Here followed a pause, much silent prayer, and many tears.)

III. That hush was not long, for speedily the Great Quickener entered upon his gracious work. This is our third point: JESUS IS ABLE TO WORK THE MIRACLE OF LIFE-GIVING. Jesus Christ has life in himself, and he quickeneth whom he will (John v. 21). Such life is there in him that "he that liveth and believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Our blessed Lord immediately went up to the bier. What lay before him? It was a corpse. *He could derive no aid from that lifeless form.* The spectators were sure that he was dead, for they were carrying him out to bury him. No deception was possible, for his own mother believed him dead, and you may be sure that if there had been a spark of life in him she would not have given him up to the jaws of the grave. There was then no hope—no hope from the dead man, no hope from any one in the crowd either of bearers or of

disciples. They were all powerless alike. Even so, you, O sinner, cannot save yourself, neither can any of us, or all of us save you.

There is no help for you, dead sinner, beneath yon skies; no help in yourself or in those who love you best. But, lo, the Lord hath laid help on one that is mighty. If Jesus wants the least help you cannot render it, for you are dead in sins. There you lie, dead on the bier, and nothing but the sovereign power of divine omnipotence can put heavenly life into you. Your help must come from above.

While the bier stood still, Jesus spoke to the dead young man, *spoke to him personally:* "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." O Master, personally speak to some young man this morning; or, if thou wilt, speak to the old, or speak to a woman; but speak the word home to them. We mind not where the Lord's voice may fall. Oh that it would now call those around me, for I feel that there are dead ones all over the building! I stand with biers all about me, and dead ones on them. Lord Jesus, art thou not here? What is wanted is thy personal call. Speak, Lord, we beseech thee!

"Young man," said he, "arise;" and *he spake as if the man had been alive.* This is the gospel way. He did not wait till he saw signs of life before he bade him rise; but to the dead man he said, "Arise." This is the model of gospel preaching: in the name of the Lord Jesus, his commissioned servants speak to the dead as if they were alive. Some of my brethren cavil at this, and say that it is inconsistent and foolish; but all through the New Testament it is even so. There we read, "Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." I do not attempt to justify it; it is more than enough for me that so I read the Word of God. We are to bid men believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, even though we know that they are dead in sin, and that faith is the work of the Spirit of God. Our faith enables us in God's name to command dead men to live, and they do live. We bid unbelieving man believe in Jesus, and power goes with the Word, and God's elect do believe. It is by this word of faith which we preach that the voice of Jesus sounds out to men. The young man who could not rise, for he was dead, nevertheless did rise when Jesus bade him. Even so, when the Lord speaks by his servants the gospel command, "Believe and live," is obeyed, and men live.

But the Saviour, you observe, *spoke with his own authority*—"Young man, *I say unto thee*, Arise." Neither Elijah nor Elisha could thus have spoken; but he who spoke thus was very God of very God. Though veiled in human flesh, and clothed in lowliness, he was that same God who said, "Let there be light, and there was light." If any of us are able by faith to say, "Young man, Arise," we can only say it in *his* name—we have no authority but what we derive from *him.* Young man, the voice of Jesus can do what your mother cannot. How often has her sweet voice wooed you to come to Jesus, but wooed in vain! Oh, that the Lord Jesus would inwardly speak to you! Oh, that he would say, "Young man, Arise." I trust that while I am speaking the Lord is silently speaking in your hearts by his Holy Spirit. I feel sure that it is even so. If so, within you a gentle movement of the Spirit is inclining you to repent and yield your heart to Jesus. This shall be a blessed day to the spiritually dead young

man, if now he accepts his Saviour, and yields himself up to be renewed by grace. No, my poor brother, they shall not bury you! I know you have been very bad, and they may well despair of you; but while Jesus lives we cannot give you up.

The miracle was wrought straightway: for this young man, to the astonishment of all about him, sat up. His was a desperate case, but death was conquered, for he sat up. He had been called back from the innermost dungeon of death, even from the grave's mouth; but he sat up when Jesus called him. It did not take a month, nor a week, nor an hour, nay, not even five minutes. Jesus said, "Young man, Arise." And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." In an instant the Lord can save a sinner. Ere the words I speak can have more than entered your ear, the divine flash which gives you eternal life can have penetrated your breast, and you shall be a new creature in Jesus Christ, beginning to live in newness of life from this hour, no more to feel spiritually dead, or to return to your old corruption. New life, new feeling, new love, new hopes, new company shall be yours, because you have passed from death unto life. Pray God that it may be so, for he will hear us.

IV. Our time has gone, and although we have a wide subject we may not linger. I must close by noticing that THIS WILL PRODUCE VERY GREAT RESULTS. To give life to the dead is no little matter.

The great result was manifest, first, in the young man. Would you like to see him as he was? Might I venture to draw back the sheet from his face? See there what death has done. He was a fine young man. To his mother's eye he was the mirror of manhood! What a pallor is on that face! How sunken are the eyes! You are feeling sad. I see you cannot bear the sight. Come, look into this grave, where corruption has gone further in its work. Cover him up! We cannot bear to look at the decaying body! But when Jesus Christ has said, "Arise," what a change takes place! Now you may look at him. His blue eye has the light of heaven in it; his lips are coral red with life; his brow is fair and full of thought. Look at his healthy complexion, in which the rose and the lily sweetly contend for mastery. What a fresh look there is about him, as of the dew of the morning! He has been dead, but he lives, and no trace of death is on him. While you are looking at him he begins to speak. What music for his mother's ear! What did he say? Why, that I cannot tell you. Speak yourself as a newly-quickened one, and then I shall hear what you say. I know what *I* said. I think the first word I said when I was quickened was, "Hallelujah." Afterwards, I went home to my mother, and told her that the Lord had met with me. No words are given here. It does not quite matter what those words are, for any words proved him to be alive. If you know the Lord, I believe you will speak of heavenly things. I do not believe that our Lord Jesus has a dumb child in his house: they all speak *to* him, and most of them speak *of* him. The new birth reveals itself in confession of Christ, and praise of Christ. I warrant you, that his mother, when she heard him speak, did not criticize what he said. She did not say, "That sentence is ungrammatical." She was too glad to hear him speak at all, that she did not examine all the

expressions which he used. Newly-saved souls often talk in a way which after years and experience will not justify. You often hear it said of a revival meeting, that there was a good deal of excitement, and certain young converts talked absurdly. That is very likely: but if genuine grace was in their souls, and they bore witness to the Lord Jesus, I for one would not criticize them very severely. Be glad if you can see any proof that they are born again, and mark well their future lives. To the young man himself a new life had begun—life from among the dead.

A new life also had begun in reference to *his mother*. What a great result for her was the raising of her dead son! Henceforth he would be doubly dear. Jesus helped him down from the bier, and delivered him to his mother. We have not the words he used; but we are sure that he made the presentation most gracefully, giving back the son to the mother as one presents a choice gift. With a majestic delight which always goes with his condescending benevolence, he looked on that happy woman, and his glance was brighter to her than the light of the morning, as he said to her, "Receive thy son." The thrill of her heart was such as she would never forget. Observe carefully that our Lord, when he puts the new life into young men, does not want to take them away with him from the home where their first duty lies. Here and there one is called away to be an apostle or a missionary; but usually he wants them to go home to their friends, and bless their parents, and make their families happy and holy. He does not present the young man to the priest, but he delivers him to his mother. Do not say, "I am converted, and therefore I cannot go to business any more, or try to support my mother by my trade." That would prove that you were not converted at all. You may go for a missionary in a year or two's time if you are fitted for it; but you must not make a dash at a matter for which you are not prepared. For the present go home to your mother, and make your home happy, and charm your father's heart, and be a blessing to your brothers and sisters, and let them rejoice because "he was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

What was the next result? Well, all the neighbours feared and glorified God. If yonder young man who last night was at the music-hall, and a few nights ago came home very nearly drunk; if that young man is born again, all around him will wonder at it. If that young man who has got himself out of a situation by gambling, or some other wrong-doing, is saved, we shall all feel that God is very near us. If that young man who has begun to associate with evil women, and to fall into other evils, is brought to be pure-minded and gracious, it will strike awe into those round about him. He has led many others astray, and if the Lord now leads him back it will make a great hubbub, and men will enquire as to the reason of the change, and will see that there is a power in religion after all. Conversions are miracles which never cease. These prodigies of power in the moral world are quite as remarkable as prodigies in the material world. We want conversion, so practical, so real, so divine, that those who doubt will not be able to doubt, because they see in them the hand of God.

Finally, note that it not only surprised the neighbours and impressed them, but the rumour of it went everywhere. Who can tell? If a convert is made this morning, the result of that conversion may be felt for thousands of years, if the world stands so long; ay, it shall be felt when a thousand thousand years have passed away, even throughout eternity. Tremblingly have I dropped a smooth stone into the lake this morning. It has fallen from a feeble hand and from an earnest heart. Your tears have shown that the waters are stirred. I perceive the first circlet upon the surface. Other and wider circles will follow as the sermon is spoken of and read. When you go home and tell what God has done for your soul, there will be a wider ring; and if it should happen that the Lord should open the mouth of one of this morning's converts to preach his word, then no one can tell how wide the circle will become. Ring upon ring will the word spread itself, until the shoreless ocean of eternity shall feel the influence of this morning's word. No, I am not dreaming. According to our faith so shall it be. Grace this day bestowed by the Lord upon one single soul may affect the whole mass of humanity. God grant his blessing, even life for evermore. Pray much for a blessing. My dear friends, I beseech you, for Jesus Christ's sake, pray much for me. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke vii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—257, 233, 448.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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THE LOVER OF GOD'S LAW FILLED WITH PEACE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 22ND, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."—Psalm cxix. 165.

THIS forms part of a devotional passage. It is not merely a statement that great peace comes to those who love the law of God, but it is uttered as part of a hymn of praise unto the Lord. We cannot praise God better than by stating facts concerning him and his Word. If you desire to praise God, you must speak of him as he is. If you would pour out an acceptable libation before him, you must fill the vessel from himself, as the well-head of all excellence. Our *Te Deums* are simply declarations of what God is: there can be no higher praise. His praises can only be the reflection of his own light. All glory is already in him, none can be added to him; and so, when we are adoring him for his law, and blessing him for giving us his Word, we cannot do better than observe how that law operates upon the heart, and praise him because it so works. We have no need to heap up flattering titles as men do with their kings; we have no need to invent exaggerated expressions; we have but to speak the simple truth concerning our God, and we have praised him.

By the word "law" here is intended, not only the law of the ten commandments, but the whole of divine revelation, as it was in David's time, and as it is now. Whatever God has revealed is loved by saintly men. This sacred Book, which we commonly call the Bible, contains the mind of God, so far as he has seen fit to reveal it to men. It is the law of holiness as the guide of our actions, and the law of faith by which we receive of his grace. Here we have the law of the kingdom of heaven, the law of life in Christ Jesus. As a law of works, this holy Book convinces us of sin; as a law of love, it leads us to Jesus, to find forgiveness through his blood. In David's day, the law was a smaller Book than ours, but he found great peace in the reading of it: it was even then competent for the highest spiritual ends. We have that Book at greater length, but it is one and the same. The same gospel is in Genesis as in Matthew. The

Old Testament was perfect in itself as the law of the Lord, and the New Testament is but an expansion of the same truth which the Old contains. We rejoice to find that our larger edition of the Word of God contains nothing which lessens that great peace which the earlier Scriptures were able to produce. As the light is clearer the joy is brighter, and the reasons for great peace are more clearly seen.

God's law comprises all his precepts, and in keeping these we have peace of conscience; it contains all his promises, and these are our great peace in the hour of need; and it comprehends all those great doctrines which surround the cross of Christ and the covenant of grace, and each one of these is a fountain of peace to our hearts. We take this Book as a whole, and in this way we have peace. We dare not rend it, we would not leave out any part of it, lest we miss the blessed effect which, as a whole, it is calculated to produce. Sitting as learners at the feet of Jesus, our Master, submitting our hearts and minds to the infallible teaching of the Holy Ghost, who leads us into all truth, we find that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.

Three things in the text are worthy of earnest attention. May the Spirit of God bless all we say! First, here is *a spiritual character*—"they which love thy law": secondly, here is *a special possession*—"great peace have they": and thirdly, here is *a singular preservation*—"nothing shall offend them": or nothing shall be a stumbling-block to them. Oh, that we may know our text experimentally!

I. First, here is A SPIRITUAL CHARACTER—"they which love thy law."

Love lies deep, it is in the heart: it is not a thing of the surface, it is of the man's own self. As a man loveth so is he. To love God's law is to have the very nature and essence of our manhood in a right condition. To love the Word is something more than to read it, even though we should study it day and night. It is more even than to understand it; for the cold light of the intellect is of little worth compared with the warm sunlight of love. Many, no doubt, perceive the truths which are taught in God's Word, and so become orthodox in their professed creed; but without love their faith is dead. You cannot learn the law of God as you learn the laws of nature; your heart must be affected by it, and you must obey it in your life, or you do not truly know it. Only he who does the will of God can know of the doctrine. Mere knowledge brings no peace to the man. The truth must go from the head to the heart before its power is known. Some even try to keep the law of the Lord, so far as to make the outward life conformable to morality and religion; but this falls far short of the love of the heart. To stand in slavish fear and dread of God is better than to be utterly indifferent, but it is a poor thing compared with love. Slaves obey their masters because of the lash, and so do many outwardly follow the Word because of the spirit of bondage which will not permit them to rebel; but there is a something lacking: nothing in religion is sound till the heart goes with it. God says, "My son, give me thine heart," and he cannot be satisfied with anything short of it. Search, then, my hearers, and see if you really love the law of the Lord.

He who loves the Word would not wish to have it altered, enlarged, or diminished: it reveals enough for him, and no more; for he is content with what God chooses to teach him. If he finds any want of conformity in his own thought to God's thought, he throws his own thought away, and sets up the divine thought in its place. As he is reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, so is his mind reconciled to the teaching against which he at first rebelled. He loves the law of the Lord just as he finds it; and instead of judging it, and daring to set himself up as a dictator of what it ought to be, he is humble and docile, and cries, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." He loves every truth which the Lord declares, ay, and the very style and method of the declaration. Every word of God's Book has in it music for his ear, beauty for his eye, honey for his mouth, and food for his soul. The teachings of God's Word are to the instructed believer, not only articles of faith, but matters of life. Our faith has imbibed them, and our experience has assimilated them. We could part with everything except what we have learned out of the Sacred Book by the teaching of the Holy Ghost; for that flows through our souls like the blood through our body, and it is intermixed with every vital part of our being. Like wool which has been made to lie long in scarlet, we are dyed ingrain. As certain insects take their colour from the leaves they feed upon, so have we become tinctured to the core of our nature with the living and incorruptible Word, which has proved its own inspiration by inspiring us with its spirit. Now we live in the Word as the fish in the stream; it is the element of our spiritual life. This may suffice to set before you the sort of people who obtain great peace from the law of the Lord, because, in the truest sense, they love it.

This inward and spiritual love to God's Word includes many other good things. Permit me to use the connection in order to help myself as to order, and to help you as to memory. Read the first verse of this octave—the one hundred and sixty-first verse: "Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy Word." The love of God's law includes a deep *reverence for it*. That man is blessed who trembles at God's Word. This Book is not to be compared with other books; it is not of the same class and order. It is inspired in a sense in which they are not; it stands alone, and is not one among other books. As towers an Alp above the molehills of the meadow, so Holy Scripture rises above the purest, truest, and holiest literature of man's composing. Even could all those other books be purged of error, and be corrected to the highest degree of human knowledge, yet would they no more reach to the degree of the Book of God than man can become God. It is supreme, and of another quality from all the rest of them. Other writings we feel free to criticize, but "My heart standeth in awe of thy Word." The man who loves God's Word does not trifle with it; it is far too sacred to be toyed with. He does not cavil at it; for he believes it to be God's Word. With a docility which comes of true sonship, it is enough for him that his Father says so. His one anxiety is, as far as possible, to know the meaning of his Father's words; and, that known, all debate is out of question. "Thus saith the Lord," is to every true

child of God the end of the matter. I have often told you, my dear friends, that I view the difficulties of Holy Scriptures as so many prayer-stools upon which I kneel and worship the glorious Lord. What we cannot comprehend by our understandings we apprehend by our affections. Awe of God's Word is a main element in that love of God's law which brings great peace.

This advances to *rejoicing in it.* Read verse 162: "I rejoice at thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil." As a conqueror in the glad hour of victory shouts over the dividing of the prey, so do believers rejoice in God's Word. I can recollect as a youth the great joy I had when the doctrines of grace were gradually opened up to me by the Spirit of truth. I did not at first perceive the whole chain of precious truth. I knew that Jesus had suffered in my stead, and that by believing in him I had found peace; but the deep things of the covenant of grace came to me one by one, even as at night you first see one star and then another, and by-and-by the whole heavens are studded with them. When it first became clear to me that salvation was all of grace, what a revelation it was! I saw that God had made me to differ from others: I ascribed my salvation wholly to his free favour. I perceived that, at the back of the grace which I had received, there must have been a purpose to give that grace, and then the glorious fact of an election of grace flowed in upon my soul in a torrent of delight. I saw that the love of God to his own was without beginning—a boundless, fathomless, infinite, endless love, which carries every chosen vessel of mercy from grace to glory. What a God is the God of sovereign grace! How did my soul rejoice as I saw the God of love in his sovereignty, immutability, faithfulness, and omnipotence! "Among the gods there is none like unto thee." So will any young convert here rejoice if he so loves the law of the Lord as to continue studying it, and receiving the illumination of the Holy Ghost concerning it. As the child of God sees into the deep things of God, he will be ready to clap his hands for joy. It is a delightful sensation to feel that you are growing. Trees, I suppose, do not know when they grow, but men and women do, when the growth is spiritual. We seem to pass into a new heaven and a new earth as we discover God's truth. A new guest has come to live within our mind, and he has brought with him banquets such as we never tasted before. Oh, how happy is that man to whose loving mind Holy Scripture is opening up its priceless treasures! We know that we love God's Word when we can rejoice in it. Fain would we gather up every crumb of Scripture, and find food in its smallest fragments. Even its bitter rebukes are sweet to us. I would kiss the very feet of Scripture, and wash them with my tears! Alas, that I should sin against it by a thought, much more by a word! If it be but God's Word, though some may call it non-essential, we dare not think it so. The little things of God are more precious than the great things of man. Truth is no trifle to one who has fought his way to it, and learned it in the school of affliction. "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength!" and that which thou hast gained in the battle is thy joyful spoil.

Further than this, we receive Holy Scripture *with emotion.* David

says, "I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love." He regards all that is opposed to the law of the Lord as hateful lying. Those are hard words, David! Surely you are sinning against the charity of our cultured age! Yes, but when a man feels strongly, he cannot help speaking strongly. "I hate," says he, and that is not enough; he says, "I hate and abhor lying." His whole being revolts at it. He means not only that lying with which in common life men would deceive their fellows, and that is hateful enough; but he refers especially to that kind of teaching which gives the lie to the law of the Lord; for he adds, "But thy law do I love." A good man's hate of falsehood is as intense as his love of truth; it must necessarily be so. He who worships the true God detests and loathes idols. In these days there are many men to whom the truths of Scripture are like a pack of cards, to be shuffled as occasion suits. To them peace and quietness are jewels, and truth is as the mire of the streets. It does not matter to them what this man preaches and what that man writes. Hold your tongue, it will be all the same a hundred years hence; and really nobody can be quite sure of anything! To the man that is loyal to his Lord, and faithful to his convictions, it can never be so; he hates the teaching which belies his God. He that has never felt his blood boil against an error which robs God of his glory does not love the law, nor will he know that great peace which comes by having the law enshrined in the heart.

One other virtue is included in the love of the Word. According to the context, *great gratitude to God* for his Word is formed in the believing heart. "Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments." God's judgments written in his Word are matters of praise.

> "This is the judge that ends the strife
> Where wit and reason fail."

God's judgments actively going on in the world, which tally with those predicted in his Word, are also matters for adoring praise. The God of the word is the God of the deed. What he says he does, and every day and all the day we praise him for it.

Beloved, God may do what he wills, and we will praise him. He may say what he wills, and we will praise him. We read in his Word stern things, words of wrath and deeds of vengeance. Shall we try to soften them, or invent apologies for them? By no means. Jehovah our God is a consuming fire. We love him, not as he is improved upon by "modern thought," but as he reveals himself in Scripture. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, "this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our Guide, even unto death." Even when he is robed in the terror of his judgments, we sing praises unto his name; even as they did at the Red Sea, when they saw Pharaoh and his host swallowed up of the mighty waters: "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Our hallelujahs are "to him that slew mighty kings; for his mercy endureth for ever." It is not mine to improve upon the character of Jehovah, but to reverence and adore him as he manifests himself,

either in judgment or in grace. I, who am less than nothing and vanity, dare not scan his work, nor bring him to my bar, lest I hear a voice saying, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" What am I that I should be the ultimate judge of truth, or of justice, or of wisdom? Whatever God may be, or speak, or do—that is right: it is not mine to arraign my Maker, but to adore him. Extenuations, explanations, and apologies may be produced from the best of motives; but too often they suggest to opposers that it is admitted that God's most holy Word contains something in it which is doubtful, or weak, or antiquated. It looks as though it needed to be defended by human wisdom. Brethren, the Word of the Lord can stand alone, without the propping which many are giving it. Those props come down, and then our adversaries think that the Book is down too. The Word of God can take care of itself, and will do so if we preach it, and cease defending it. See you that lion. They have caged him for his preservation; shut him up behind iron bars to secure him from his foes! See how a band of armed men have gathered together to protect the lion. What a clatter they make with their swords and spears! These mighty men are intent upon defending a lion. O fools, and slow of heart! Open that door! Let the lord of the forest come forth free. Who will dare to encounter him? What does he want with your guardian care? Let the pure gospel go forth in all its lion-like majesty, and it will soon clear its own way and ease itself of its adversaries. Yes, without attempting to apologize even for the severer truths of revelation, seven times a day do we praise the Lord for giving us his judgments, so righteous and so sure.

I have shown you now, dear friends, how this love lies deep in the heart, and how it includes much of honour and reverence; let me further remark that *this love is productive of many good things.* They that love God's Word will *meditate* on it, and make it the man of their right hand. What a companion the Bible is! It talks with us by the way, it communes with us upon our beds: it knows us altogether, and has a suitable word for every condition of life. Hence we cannot be long without listening to our Beloved's voice in this Book of books. I hope we realize the character described in the first Psalm: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water." Love to the Word of God creates great *courage* in the defence of it. It is wonderful how the most timid creatures will defend their young, how even a hen becomes a terrible bird when she has to take care of her chicks: even so, quiet men and women contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and will not tamely submit to see the truth torn in pieces by the hounds of error and hypocrisy.

The love of the law of God breeds *penitence* for having sinned against it, and *perseverance* in obedience to it. It also begets *patience* under suffering; for it leads the man to submit himself to the will of God whom he loves so much. He saith, "It is the Lord. Let him do what seemeth him good." The Word of God begets and fosters *holiness.* Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth." You cannot study the Scriptures diligently and love them

heartily without having your thoughts and acts savoured and sweetened by them. A gentleness and kindness will be infused into your spirit by the very tone of the Word; a sacred delicacy and carefulness of conduct will surround your daily life in proportion as you steep your mind in Scripture. Let me commend to you, my beloved friends, that you live with the law of the Lord, till even men of the world perceive that you keep choice company. The trashy lives of most people are the fit outcome of the trash which they read. A life fed on fiction is a life of fiction; a life fed on divine fact will become a life of divine fact. I have not time in which to show you all the sweet uses of the law of the Lord: it doeth much every way for the formation of a perfect character. No moulding force is so much to be desired as that of the Word of the Lord in the love of it.

This much, however, I must add: if in any of us there is a love of the law of the Lord, *this is a work of the Holy Spirit.* Nature does not love God, and hence it does not love God's law. Human nature is in open and active rebellion to everything that is commanded or commended by the thrice-holy God. If, then, thou lovest God and his holy law, the Holy Ghost has been at work in thee; and by this new love it is proven that thou art a new creature. The old nature delights itself in everything which is of the earth earthy; it is only the new and heavenly life which can appreciate and love heavenly things. My brother, let thy love of the law be to thee a proof of thy regeneration; thou hast passed from darkness into marvellous light, for thou lovest light. Let this be to thee the evidence of thine election: thou hadst never loved God and his law if he had not loved thee first. What can thy love to God be but a reflection of his love to thee. Wherefore, hear him say, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." See, also, in this love of God's law the prophecy of thine ultimate perfection. We do not keep the law as we would; but if we will to keep it, that which holds the will is the real law of our life. If there be in us a strong and passionate desire to accept and obey God's Word in everything, and to be conformed to it in thought and life, that desire will ultimately get the victory. Use well the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and by the force of thy love give sin sharp and heavy thrusts, and thou shalt conquer until every thought is brought into captivity to the law of Christ.

II. We have spent too long a time upon our first point, and shall have to be brief upon the other heads. Our second division is a very sweet part of the text; here is A SPECIAL POSSESSION, "great peace have they which love thy law." When Orientals meet each other their usual salutation is "Shalom"—"Peace be to thee." The word does not mean merely quiet and rest, but happiness or prosperity. Great peace means great prosperity. Those who love God's law have great blessedness in this life as well as in that which is to come. In loving the law of God we have intense enjoyment and real success in life.

Let us, however, take the text as we have it in our Bibles. By peace here is not meant that a man who loves God's law will have great peace with everybody, for that is not at all true. If David penned this sentence, he certainly was not an instance of great peace

with men flowing out of his love to the Lord's law. He was a man of war from his youth. He had peace as a shepherd boy, but even then he had to kill lions and bears, and soon after he had to meet a giant in single combat. Neither in his family nor in Saul's court was he at peace. He was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, and had to run for it from day to day. He had not much earthly peace; for when he had done with Saul, the Philistines invaded the land. If it be possible, we are to live peaceably with all men; but he who has put enmity between the serpent and the woman never meant that we should enjoy the friendship of the world. The great peace which they have who love God's law refers to a peace which can exist when strife rages all around us.

Does not it mean this—first, *great restfulness of the intellect?* If we love God's law in the sense in which we have explained it, so as to stand in awe of it, and rejoice over it, the result will be great peace of mind. Everybody must find infallibility somewhere. Some think it is with the Pope at Rome, others dream that it is in themselves: the second theory is no more true than the first. Others of us believe that infallibility lies in the Word of God: this Book is to us the final court of appeal. When God's Holy Spirit leads us into the truth which he has revealed in this Book, we feel a full assurance that we know the truth, and we speak from experience when we say that the loving belief of the Word brings us great intellectual repose. I care nothing what supposed philosophers may discover: they cannot discover anything true which is contrary to God's Word. I know that I am speaking that which is best for my fellow-men in the highest and best sense, when I am not venting a theory, but setting forth a revelation from heaven.

He who gave us the infallible Book has all the responsibility for its contents. If I believe what God tells me, and do what he bids me, the results are with him, and not with me. He is the ruler of the universe, and not I; and if there be any terrible mysteries, he must explain them, and not I, if they ought to be explained. I am like a servant who is sent to the door with a message; if I deliver the message which my master gives me as I receive it, you must not be angry with me, for I did not invent the message, I only repeated it to you. Be angry with my master, not with me. That is how I feel when I have done preaching. If I have honestly preached what I believe to be in God's Word, I am free from all responsibility for my ministry. My responsibility lies in endeavouring to interpret the Word as clearly as I can; I am not accountable for its teaching. I have not before me the unbearable burden of composing a gospel. I remember well a minister, whom I much respect, saying to me, "I wish I could feel as you do. You have certain fixed principles about which you are sure, and you have only to state them and enforce them; but I am in a formative state; I make my theology fresh every week." Dear me, I thought, what a hopeless state for progress and establishment! If the student of mathematics had no fixed law as to the value of numbers, but made a new multiplication table every week, he would not make many calculations. If a baker were to say to me, "Sir, I am always altering the ingredients of my bread: I make a different

bread every week"; I should be afraid the fellow would poison me one of these days. I would rather go to a man whose bread I had found good and nourishing. I cannot afford to experiment in the bread of life. Beside, there is an intellectual unrest in all this kind of thing, which is escaped from when we come to love the Word of the Lord as we love our lives. Oh the rest of knowing within your very soul that the truth you rest upon is a sure foundation!

Those who love God's Word have also a great peace which comes of *a pacified conscience.* Conscience is as a terrible wild beast when aroused and irritated by a sense of sin. Nothing will quiet conscience effectually and properly but the great doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. When we see that God has laid on his only begotten Son all our iniquities, and that the chastisement of our peace was exacted of him, as our substitute, then conscience smiles upon us. If God is satisfied with regard to our sins, we are satisfied too. We see in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ that which must satisfy divine justice, and therefore our conscience receives a safe and holy quietus, and we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the atonement.

And the same conscience also brings great peace when it bears testimony to renewal of heart and life. When a man knows in his own soul that he seeks to do that which is right in the sight of God, and that he is aspiring after a pure, gracious, useful life, he has great peace even when others ridicule him. If you have taken your own way, and acted dishonestly for gain, peace will not visit your heart; but if you have loved God's law, and kept to the way of strict integrity, you will have within your own bosom an angel of peace to strengthen you in the hour of sorrow. "The testimony of a good conscience" is like the song of the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem.

Beloved, what a peace the love of the Word brings to *the heart!* All hearts require an object of love. How many hearts have been broken because the thing beloved has disappointed them, and proved false to their hopes! But when you love God's Word, your love is not wasted upon an unworthy object. It introduces you to Christ, and you love him intensely, and however much you yield your heart to him, you are always safe. Jesus is never a Judas to his friends. Jesus cannot be loved too well, and hence the heart has great peace when it comes to him.

To love God's Word gives great peace as to *our desires.* You will not be grasping after wealth when the Word is better to you than the most fine gold. You will not be ambitious to shine among men when to you the Word of the Lord is a kingdom large enough. Your desires will be regulated by true wisdom when your heart is garrisoned by the Word of the Lord which dwells in you richly. When Christ himself is our all in all, we are harboured in the haven of peace. When our desires find their pasturage around the Great Shepherd's feet, our ambitions cease to roam, and we abide at home in peace. Content with a dinner of herbs in our Lord's company, we no longer pine for the stalled ox of the wicked who prospers in his way. To love the law is to cease from covetousness, and to cease from covetousness is great peace.

When we love God's law also, we reach forward to the peace of *resignation* to God, acquiescence in his will, and conformity to it. It is of no use to quarrel with God; let me say more, it is disgraceful, ungrateful, and wicked for a child of God to do so. When we perfectly yield to God, our heart's sorrow is at an end. The sting of affliction lies in the tail of our rebellion against the divine will. When we love God's Word intensely, we take pleasure in persecutions, tribulations, and infirmities, since they instruct us in the divine promises, and open up to us the hidden meanings of the Spirit. Our mind is so near to God, and so pleased with all that pleases him, that we do not desire to suffer less, or to be less weak, or less tried, than the will of God ordains. To love the law and the Lawgiver goes a great way towards loving all that he appoints and decrees; and this is a garden of peace to all who know it.

Besides, the love of the Word breeds *a happy confidence in God* as to all things in the past, the present, and the future. Whatsoever the Lord does or permits must be right, or work right. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." This is a very peace-breathing belief. When we love God's Word, we see God at the beginning of everything, God at the end of everything, and God in the middle of everything; and as we see him present whom we love, we cease from anxious thought. "My soul is even as a weaned child." Of such a man is it written, "His soul shall dwell at ease." The Lord whom he takes to be his Shepherd makes him to lie down in green pastures, and he asks no more.

III. I am cramped by want of time; I must, therefore, in a very few words sum up what deserves to be spoken at length upon the third point. Here is A SINGULAR PRESERVATION: "Nothing shall offend them." There shall be no stumbling-block in their way.

Intellectual stumbling-blocks are gone. One asks me, "Do you mean to say that you read the Bible and do not find difficulties in it?" I regard the Word of God as being infallibly inspired, and therefore if I find difficulties in it, which I must do from the very nature of things, I accept what God says about those difficulties, and pass on. The Word of God does not profess to explain all mysteries: it leaves them mysteries, and my faith accepts them as such. When out in a yacht in the Clyde we came opposite the great rock called the Cock of Arran. Our captain did not steam right ahead, and rush at the rock; no, he did what was much wiser: he cast anchor for the night in the bay at the foot of it, so that we were sheltered from the wind by the vast headland. I remember looking up through the darkness of the night, and admiring its great sheltering wing. A difficulty was it. It became a shelter. Every now and then in Scripture you come before a vast truth. Will you steam against it, and wreck your soul? Will you not, with truer wisdom, cast anchor under the lee of it? Do we need to understand everything? Are we to be all brain, and no heart? What should we be the better if we did understand all mysteries? I believe God. I bow before his Word. Is not this better for us than the conceit of knowing and understanding? We are as yet mere children. We know in part. Of course,

we are blessed, in this enlightened age, with some wonderfully great men, who understand more than the ancients, and either know the unknowable, or think they do. In a sentence I will give you the result of my observation upon men and things: "No man knows everything except a fool, and he knows nothing." I have not yet met with any exception to this rule; no, not even among the superior persons who prefer culture to Scripture. If thou lovest the Word of God, thou wilt see no difficulties which will in the least cause thee to stumble. Love to the Word is the abolition of difficulties. Things hard to be understood become stepping-stones on which to rise, and not stumbling-blocks over which to fall.

"Nothing shall offend them." Does not this also mean that *no moral duty shall be a cross to them* which shall cause them to turn aside? They will not turn away from Jesus because a sin has to be abandoned, a lust denied, or a pleasure given up. The man who has counted the cost will not be offended by his Lord's requirements. Does Jesus say, "Do this?" He does it without demur. Does Jesus say, "Cease from that?" He withdraws his hand at the instant. When a man once loves the law of God, albeit it involves self-denial, humiliation, loss, he shrinks not at the cost. Self-denial ceases to be self-denial when love commands it. The cross of Christ is an easy yoke, and soon ceases to be a burden. A duty which for a little season is irksome, becomes pleasurable before long to a lover of the law of the Lord.

Moreover, the man who loves God's law is *not offended if he has to stand alone.* To some persons it is impossible to traverse a lonesome way, but he that truly loves God's law resolves that if all men forsake him he will cleave to the Lord and his truth. Can you not stand alone? Does solitude offend you? As for me, I am resolved not to follow a multitude to do evil. I will keep to the old faith, and the old way, if I never find a comrade between here and the celestial gates. I do not think a man loves God's Word thoroughly till it breeds in him a self-contained peace, so that he is satisfied from himself, and drinks water out of the cistern of his own experience. Paul was not offended, though at his first answer no man stood by him. What have we to do with other men as supporters of our faith? To their own master they stand or fall. As for our Master in heaven, let us follow him through life, and unto death; for to whom else could we go? He only hath the words of eternal life.

Neither will such persons ever be so offended as to despair of God's great cause. The night grows darker and darker, but the man who loves the divine law expects the sun to rise at his appointed hour. Oh that the Lord would hasten it in his own time! If he delay, we will not therefore doubt. Grace has produced, in past ages, men who were confident as to the triumph of truth when others feared for it. Look at the dauntless courage of Luther, who, when everybody else despaired of the gospel, trusted his God and cheered his people, and would not hear of drawing back. He could not pronounce the word "despair." "Luther, canst thou shake Rome? The harlot sits enthroned upon her seven hills, canst thou hope to dislodge her, or loose the captive nations from her bonds? Canst thou do this?" "No," said Luther,

"but God can." Luther brought his God into the quarrel, and you know which way the conflict turned. Not to-day, nor to-morrow, nor in twenty years, may God's truth win; but the Lord can afford to wait. His lifetime is eternity. O struggler for the truth, make thou sure that thou art with God and with the truth, and then be sure that God is with thee in truth, and will deliver thee. "Nothing shall offend them."

It is wonderful, if you love God's Word, how things which are stumbling-blocks to others cease to be injurious to you. Suppose you enjoy prosperity: if you love God's law, you will not be puffed up by deceitful riches or honours. You will be humble, when all men admire you, and all comforts flow in upon you. The Lord's Word in your heart will be as a salt to your estate, so that it breeds in thee neither worldliness, nor forgetfulness of God, nor pride. Your goods shall be your good, if you learn to use them for God's glory.

The same will be true of adversity. He that can stand on the hill-top can stand in the valley. If you love God's law, you are the man to be poor, to be sickly, to be slandered; for you can bear it all, because you have meat to eat that the world knows not of. Your love to God's law will furnish you with a ceaseless stream of consolation. Nothing will damp the flame of your spirit, because the Lord feeds it secretly with a golden oil. O servants of God, let us be glad together in this day of rebuke! The thunder is heard, but it is mere noise. The sea roars, but it is only roaring. Let us laugh at those who would silence faithful testimony; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and great is the peace which he gives to the lovers of his law.

As for you who love not God's law, who know nothing of Jesus, because you have never submitted to the law of faith—there is no "great peace" for you. There may be the deceptive cry of, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace"; but may the Lord save you from it! Soul, there is no hope for thee, thou canst not rest till thou art at one with God. As surely as God made thee, thou must yield to thy Maker, and accept thy Redeemer, and be renewed by his Holy Spirit, or thou art lost for ever. I pray God the Holy Ghost lead thee to accept what God has revealed, and bow thyself to the supreme majesty of his Word, especially to the power and grace of the Incarnate Word, the Lord Christ Jesus; then wilt thou have great peace for this world and the next. God bless you, beloved, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxix. 161—176.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—100 (Version I.), 478, 667.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE HAIRS OF YOUR HEAD NUMBERED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."—Matthew x. 30.

It is most delightful to see *how familiarly* our Lord Jesus talked with his disciples. He was very great, and yet he was among them as one that serveth; he was very wise, but he was gentle as a nurse with her children; he was very holy, and far above their sinful infirmities, but he condescended to men of low estate; he was their Master and Lord, and yet their friend and servant. He talked with them, not as a superior who domineers, but as a brother full of tenderness and sympathy. You know how sweetly he once said to them, "If it were not so, I would have told you"; and thus he proved that he had hidden nothing from them that was profitable to them. He laid bare his very heart to them: his secret was with them. He loved them to the uttermost, and caused the full river of his life to flow for their behoof.

Now, in this chapter, if you read it at home, you will see *how wisely* the Lord Jesus deals with their fears. He is afraid lest they should be afraid; anxious that they should not be anxious; so he talks to them as a very tender friend would talk to some very nervous person—some weak-minded brother or sister—and he speaks in such a way that if they were not comforted, surely they must have wilfully resolved to put comfort from them. He says to them, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Brethren, admire the tenderness of our Lord Jesus, and imitate it. Let us try to be equally kind to our fellow-Christians: let us never attempt to show off, or to make ourselves somebody, or to exhibit our strength of faith, for that will grieve the tender little ones, and make them shrink into self-upbraidings.

Let us consider their weakness, and the help that we can render them; their sorrow, and the comfort that we can afford them. Jesus was himself a Comforter, or he could not have spoken of "another Comforter"; and so let us be comforters in our measure, treading in his steps.

This reminds me, also, to say *how very homely* the Saviour's talk became with his disciples in consequence of this desire to cheer their hearts. Why, he talks, I have often thought, just in the way in which any one of us would have talked to our children when desirous to encourage them! There is nothing about the Saviour's language which makes you say to yourself, "What a grand speech! What a rhetorician! What an orator he is!" If any man makes you say that of him, suspect that he is off the lines a little. He is forgetting the true object of a loving mind, and is seeking to be a fine speaker, and to impress people with the idea that he is saying something very wonderful, and saying it very grandly. The Saviour quite ignores all idea of beautiful expression in just trying to bring forth his meaning in the plainest possible manner. He sought the shortest way to the hearts of those whom he addressed, and he cared nothing whether flowers grew or did not grow by the roadside. Hence there is no eloquence like the eloquence of Jesus: there is a style of majestic simplicity about him that is altogether his own, and in this lies unsurpassed sublimity. I now and then see in books quotations, and the names of the authors are put at the foot of the extracts. But whenever I observe that the name of Christ is put below a quotation I regard it as a superfluity which ought to be struck out; for there is never any fear of mistaking the language of the Son of God for that of any of the sons of men. He has a style all his own. This, however, is incidental to the design aimed at; for he does not study style of rhetoric in any degree, but simply aims at conveying his thought. Hence he speaks in homely words, such as those of our text—"The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Your great and learned men will not talk about the hairs of your head; all their discourse is upon the nebulæ and the stars, geological periods and organic remains, evolution and the solidarity of the race, and I know not what besides. They will not stoop to common-place things; they must say something great, sublime, dazzling, brilliant, full of fireworks. The Master is as far removed from all this as the heavens are from the gaudiest canopy that ever bedecked a mortal's throne. He talks in homely language because he is at home; he speaks the language of the heart because he is all heart, and wants to reach the hearts of those to whom he speaks. I commend the text to you for that reason, though for many others besides. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Thinking over these words, they seem to have in them four things at least, and we may take four views of their meaning: and the first is, *fore-ordination*—"The very hairs of your head *have been* all numbered." You will find that to be a more accurate version of the text than that which is before us. The verb is not in the present, but in the pluperfect tense. The very hairs of your head have been all numbered before worlds were made. Secondly, I see in the text *knowledge*.

This is very clear: God so knows his people that the very hairs of their head are all numbered by him. Thirdly, there is here *valuation:* he sets such a high estimate upon his own servants, that of them it is said, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." You are so precious that the least portion of you is precious; the King keeps a register of every part of you, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." And, lastly, here is most evidently *preservation.* The Saviour has been telling them not to fear those that can kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul. He speaks of God's preserving them. In another place he told his disciples, "There shall not a hair of your head perish," and he intends the same sense in this case; there shall be a perfect preservation of his people. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

I. Come, then, to the first thought. Here is FORE-ORDINATION. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Most Christian people believe in the providence of God, but all Christian people are not prepared to follow out the truth which that involves. They appear to believe that there is a providence overruling, but they seem to have forgotten that there always was such a providence, and that providence must be, after all, a matter of divine foresight. God must have foreseen, or he could not have provided, for "providence" is, after all, but the Latin for foresight; and the provision which God makes is but the result of his vision beforehand of such and such a thing as needful to us. Foresight must essentially belong to any true and real providence.

How far does God's foresight extend? It extends, we believe, to *the entire man and all about him.* God ordained of old when we should be born, and where, and who our parents should be, and what our lot in infancy, and what our path in youth, and what our position in manhood. From the first to the last it has all happened according to the divine purpose, even as it was ordained by the divine will. Not only the man, but all that concerns the man, is fore-ordained of the Lord: "the very hairs of your head," that is to say, all that which has anything to do with you, which comes into any kind of contact with you, and is in any sense part and parcel of yourself, is under the divine foresight and predestination. Everything is in the divine purpose, and has been ordered by the divine wisdom: all the events of your life—the greater certainly, the smaller with equal certainty. It is impossible to draw a line in providence, and say this is arranged by providence, and that is not. It must take everything in its sweep, all that happens; it determines not only the movement of a star, but the blowing of a grain of dust along the public road. All this, from the very nature of the thing, is clear. God's providence knows nothing of things so little as to be beneath its notice, nothing of things so great as to be beyond its control. Nothing is too little or too great for God to rule and overrule.

All that a man undergoes is also ordained of heaven; the hairs of your head, should they turn white in a single night by grief, will not do so without divine permission. Should you be spared till every hair constitutes a part of the crown of glory of your old age, you shall not be older than God wills. You shall neither die before your time, nor

live beyond it. All that concerns you, I say, from first to last, all that is of you, and in you, and around you—

> "All shall come, and last, and end,
> As shall please your heavenly Friend."

"The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

And this is what I call your attention to: what is the source of this numbering? It is not that they are all numbered by some recording angel who is set to do the work. It may be so, but that is not the thing we have to consider to-night. *This numbering is done by your Father, who is in heaven.* The ordinances that rule your life are in his hand: unto him belong the issues from death; and this makes it to be such a happy fact. Fate is hard and cruel; but predestination is fatherly, and wise, and kind. The wheels of providence are always high and terrible; but they are full of eyes, and those eyes look with the clear sight of wisdom, and righteousness, and love, and they look towards the good of them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose. Terrible, indeed, it is to think of things as fixed by an eternal plan; but the terror is taken from it when we feel that we are children of this great Father, and that he wills nothing but what shall, in the end, work out our conformity to the image of his Son, and display the glory of his own righteousness, and grace, and truth.

Dear friend, perhaps you are blind! You will feel sweet content in the dark when you can say, "This blindness was determined of my tender and loving Father; I know it was so, since the very hairs of my head are all numbered." Or it may be that you have from childhood been the subject of another physical infirmity, which has caused you great loss and pain, and even now it is threatening to bring you suddenly to the grave. Had this cross been laid upon you by an enemy, you might have complained, but it has been ordained for you by him who cannot be unkind or unjust; therefore say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." We are taught to pray, "Thy will be done." Dare we contradict our own prayers by kicking against that will? Job glorified God, and yet he spake no more than he should have done when he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." I always admire in Job his ascribing all his afflictions to the Lord; because apparently it was the Sabeans that took away his oxen and asses; it was the Chaldeans that took away his camels; it was the wind from the wilderness, raised by the devil, that took away his children. Job does not care so much for Sabeans, and Chaldeans, and devils, as to mention them; but he cries, looking to the First Cause of all events, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." When we can get at the back of visible things, and see, not merely the puppets, but the strings that move them, then we come near to wisdom. Wicked beings act according to their own free will, and therefore the whole of the moral evil of their doings rests wholly and solely with themselves; but the great God, somehow, mysteriously, quite clear of all complicity with human sin, effects his own purposes, which are always good and right. He it is who from evil, either real or seeming, still produceth good, and better

still, and better still, in infinite progression. When, I say, we get to this First Force, and real source of power, then we get where we learn wisdom, and we are helped in the struggle of life. When we see that all things are arranged by him who ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will, then we bow our heads and worship.

The practical outcome of all this, to every Christian, should be just this, "If it be so, that all things in my life are ordered of God, even to the hairs of my head, then let me learn *submission;* let me bow before the Supreme Will which ought to have its way. Though it cost me many a tear, and many a pang, yet will I never be content until I can say, 'Father, thy will be done.'" Human nature prompts us to ask that, if it be possible, the bitter cup may pass away from us; but the divine nature, which God has put into his true children, helps them still to struggle after full submission, till at last they are conquerors over themselves, and God is glorified in the temple of their being. I am sure, my brothers, our happiness lies very much in our complete submission to the Lord our God. If you cannot bring your estate to your mind, bring your mind to your estate. The old proverb bids us cut our coat according to our cloth, and he that can clothe his mind with the garments which providence allots him needs not to envy my Lord Mayor in his robes. Joy lies more in the mind than in the place or the possession. He that hath enough, though he hath but a few shillings a week, hath more than the possessor of millions. He that is content is the truly rich man; your money-grubber is always poor, how can he be otherwise—poor in the worst sense of the word? Oh, it is a blessed thing when one can think of all the events of providence that God is ordering them all: then we dissolve our own will into the sweetness of God's will, and our sorrow is at an end!

This, I think, should, in addition to teaching us submission, always give us such a degree of *consolation* in the time of trouble that we even rise into something like joy. I was reading to-day of old Mr. Dodd, who is a person the Puritans are always quoting—a man who did not write books, but he seems to have said things with which other people made their books attractive. This old Mr. Dodd, it is said, had a great trouble, a bodily complaint I will not mention, but it is one of the most painful a man can suffer from; and when he was told that this had come upon him, and that it was incurable, the old man shed a few natural tears at the great and excruciating pain; but at last he said, "This is evidently from God, and God never sent me anything but it was for my good, therefore let us kneel down together, and thank God for this." It was well said of the old man, and it was well done of him that he thanked God most heartily. Oh yes, let us kneel down together, and thank God for our trouble! Is it consumption, a dying child, a farm that does not pay, a business that is gradually leaking away?—let us firmly believe that our God has never sent us anything but what he meant good by it; therefore, let us kneel down, and thank God with all our hearts. If your child should come to you, and say, "Father, I thank you for the rod; I know it has been for my good," you would feel it was time to have done correcting him. Evidently he is not so dull and foolish as to need a sharp awakening by chastisement. He sees the evil of his disobedience,

and the necessity of chastisement, and now he can be left to follow out the lessons he has learned. When you and I begin to be familiar with affliction, and to thank God for it, we are pretty nearly getting through it. I believe, myself, that there is a period often set to the sorrows of saints, and that the period is usually coincident with their perfect acquiescence in them. When they are content to have all things as God wills, God will be content to let them have it much as they will. When two wills run together, our will and God's will, then we shall find a sweet double stream of silver peace flowing throughout the rest of our lives. Therefore, let us come to this—if even the very hairs of our head are all numbered, if everything be really ordained of the Most High concerning his people, let us rejoice in the divine appointment, and take it as it comes, and praise his name, whether our allotment be rough or smooth, bitter or sweet. Let us cheerfully say, "If the Lord wills it, and we will it, too; if he hath purposed it, even so let it be; since all things work together for good to them that love God, even to them that are called according to his purpose."

I shall not plunge into the slough of difficulties which some of you are sure to see lying in the way; I trip over the mire with the nimble feet of faith. I shall not discuss how fore-ordination can be shown to be consistent with the responsibility of man, and the free-will of man, and all that. I believe in the responsibility of man, and the free-will of man, as much as I believe in predestination. I believe in the responsibility of man as much as you do, and I believe in the free-agency of man as much as anybody living. How can I believe both doctrines? I evidently can believe them both, for I do believe them. I have learned this: that the man whose creed is consistent in the judgment of others usually has a very scanty, poverty-stricken creed; and a good deal of it is rather theory than revelation. When you come to make up your theology into a system, you are very apt to act like a builder, who fills in between the great stones mortar of his own mixing. I am content to pile up the unhewn stones, and put in no cement of my own. I will not shape truth, much less add to it. "If thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." He who takes truth as he finds it in the inspired Book has enough material, and it is all sound. I believe that all the contradictions in Scripture are only apparent ones. I cannot expect to understand the mysteries of God, neither do I wish to do so. If I understood God, he could not be the true God. A doctrine which I cannot fully grasp is a truth which is intended to grasp me. When I cannot climb, I kneel. Where I cannot build an observatory, I set up an altar. A great stone which I cannot lift serves me for a pillar, upon which I pour the oil of gratitude, and adore the Lord my God. How idle it is to dream of our ever running parallel in understanding with the infinite God! His knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is so high we cannot attain to it. Have you never heard of the inquisitive boy who had been forbidden to go into his father's study. He tried the door, but it was fastened: all proper and safe entrance was out of the question. But he could not be content till he had satisfied his curiosity, and therefore he climbed up to the window. To his father's horror, up two stories high, stood his little boy, looking in upon him, and crying with childish pride, "Father,

I can see you." What a position of danger for the child! He must be got down, and taught not to climb there again. Shall we imitate this childish folly? Brethren, I will not attempt it. I do not want to endanger my soul, and perhaps even my reasoning powers, by straining after the unknowable. Poor child that I am, I would rather love God and wonder at him, than regard him with cold, intellectual apprehensions, and dream that I know him altogether. I pray to grow in the knowledge of that which the Lord reveals: and I pray for grace to limit my curiosity by the boundaries of his revelation; surely these are far enough apart for the largest researches. As for the difficulty before us, I do not understand it; and what good would it be to me if I did understand it? I know that whatever a man does that is wrong, he does it of his own free-will; and all the sin in the world I believe to be caused by the wilful and censurable choice of the transgressor; but I know that, at the same time, there is a grasp of foresight and predestination so comprehensive that everything accords with the divine fore-knowledge and predestination. Let our hair grow as it will, or let us pluck out what hairs we please, let nothing interfere with our absolute liberty in that matter; and yet the hairs of our head are all numbered. So much for fore-sight.

II. Now, secondly, here is KNOWLEDGE—God's intimate knowledge of his people. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Observe what a full knowledge God has of each one of his children. If there were nobody else in the world except you, and God had nothing else to do but to think of you, and there were no objects of his attention beyond yourself, and his eternal mind had no object of consideration but you only, the Lord would not then know more about you than he does now. The omniscience of God is concentrated upon every single being, and yet it is not divided by the multiplicity of its objects; it is not the less upon any single one because there are so many. How it should astonish us, that the Lord knows us at this moment so intimately as to count every hair of our heads! The knowledge which the Lord has concerning his people is most minute, and takes in those small matters which men set down as unconsidered trifles. He knows what you and I hardly wish to know: he knows that which we may be content to leave unknown: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

He knows us better than our friends know us. Many a man has a kind friend who knows his affairs most accurately, but even such a familiar acquaintance has never counted the hairs of your head. No man's wife has done that, nor even the doctor who has, by his long attendance upon us, become aware of the condition and health of every part of our body. God knows us better than we know ourselves. Nobody knows how many hairs he has upon his own head; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered by One who knows us better than we know ourselves. God knows matters about us that we could not of ourselves discover. There are secrets of the heart which are unknown even to ourselves, but they are not secrets to him. His penetrating knowledge reaches to the most hidden things of life and spirit.

Do you not think that a charmingly tender knowledge is intended

when we are told that the Lord counts the very hairs of our heads? Does it not intimate how much he thinks of them? There are some who love us very much, and they are always aiming at our good, but God goes beyond them all in a more than motherly care of us, strikingly minute in its thoughtfulness. We see that his love passeth the love of women, for the very hairs of our head are numbered; and that at every period of our lives. Does it not imply a very sympathetic care? When one has a sick child, and watches over it night and day, every little fact about it is known and noted. The darling looks a little pale to-day, or he fails a little in his appetite; the symptom is anxiously noted. You know how easily love can degenerate into foolishness in that direction; but, without any folly, God is infinitely careful and kind towards us, for he knows when we have lost a hair from our head. We cannot make one hair white or black, but he knows when they turn white with grief or age. He understands all about our fading and our growing grey, the little details concerning our body as well as the minute circumstances that try our souls. It seems to me—I do not know how it strikes you—as meaning a very, very, very intimate, tender, and affectionate knowledge of us; and the fact that the Lord thus graciously looks upon us should fill us with joy.

This careful, tender knowledge on God's part is constant. He knows the number of the hairs of our head to-day, to-morrow, and all the days: he without ceasing watches all the processes which even in the least manner affect our lives. So intimate is his knowledge of us, that our lying down and our rising up, our thoughts and our ways, are all continually before him. And what are we to learn from this? Does it not make life a solemn business? Who will dare to trifle with the Lord God so near? Do you keep bees? Have you ever taken out one of the frames from their hive, and held it up to observe what they are doing on both sides of the comb? Or have you looked at them through one of those interesting hives, furnished with a glass, through which the whole business is visible? The bees scarcely notice that you watch them, certainly they are not eye-servers, for they are so industrious that they could not do more even if all eyes in the universe were fixed on them. What manner of persons ought we to be when we know that God is observing us, and noting every movement of our being! What care there should be as to our feeling, our thinking, our resolving, our desiring, our doing, and our speaking, when everything is minutely known to God, even to the counting of the very hairs of our head! What perfect consecration we ought to maintain! If God so values me, so knows me, that he counts the very hairs of my head, ought I not to give to God my whole self even to the minutest detail? Should I not give him, not merely my head, but my hair, as that penitent woman did, who unbound her tresses that she might make a towel of them, wherewith to wipe the feet that she had washed with her tears? Ought we not to consecrate to God the very least things as well as the greater things? Is it not written, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"? "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price:" and when the inventory was taken, the Lord did not leave

a hair of your head out of the catalogue. Certainly he has not left your hair to any of you Christian women wherewith to indulge your vanity and pride; it is every tress of it your Lord's. He does not leave to you men even a part of your talent, of your mind, or of your body; your whole self is altogether his, and he takes stock of it, and expects you to include it in your practical consecration. He observes what you do with little things: he notes even those minor matters which seem too inconsiderable to come under rule at all. We are under law to Christ, and that law covers the whole man.

Should not our belief in this knowledge of us by the Lord, help us in prayer? Do not some brethren pray as if they were informing God about themselves? I think I have heard remarks in prayer which seemed to imply that God was not acquainted with the Shorter Catechism; friends have even gone over the doctrines of grace as if the Lord was not aware of them. I have heard others pray as if God did not know the experience of Christians: as if they have had to explain to him some of their doubts and fears. When we pray we do not need to explain anything, for the Lord knows all about us, even to the hairs of our head. Dear friends, we have no need to explain our difficulties and perplexities to our God. "Your heavenly Father knoweth"—let this be your comfort. He knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him; this is a great help in prayer. It may shorten your prayer a good deal if you go to God with the expression of your desire, and plead his promise, and submit your spirit to his divine discretion. Such a shortening of its length will be an addition to the strength of prayer. You need not be afraid, as if God did not know, but come sweetly to him who knoweth all about you, and will not act upon your faulty information, but upon his own certain knowledge.

This persuasion will help us to feel that the Lord will deliver us out of all difficulties, for he knows the way out of every labyrinth, he perceives the answer of every enigma. If he counts the very hairs of your head, depend upon it he has a high discretion for greater things, and a matchless pilotage whereby, through waves, and rocks, and quicksands, he will gently steer your way, and bring you to the desired haven.

There is so much of comfort in this doctrine of the infinite knowledge of God that I wish every poor sinner here would remember that God knows all about him, and consequently can deal with all his sins and fears. If you want mercy, come to the Lord at once; he knows your way, he knows your position, he knows your broken heart, he knows your weary struggles, he knows what you cannot express. The whole of the wrong you have wrought, and the whole of the right you desire, he perceives; for "the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

III. Now, thirdly, and very briefly: Does not this text express VALUATION? "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." It seems, then, that lowly saints are exceedingly precious to their Lord. The whole of Christ's flock on earth were very poor people; if they had a boat and a few nets, it was all they were worth. If anybody had seen Christ in his little church on earth, he would have said, "There

is not a respectable person among them." That is how we talk nowadays; as if it were respectable to have money; as if respect did not belong to character, but only to possessions. Yet those twelve poor men he picked out, and he thought so much of them that he numbered the hairs of their heads. Yonder is a poor old man in the aisle, and he has a fustian jacket on; never mind his fustian jacket, the very hairs of his head are all numbered. Yonder is a poor old woman just come out of the workhouse, and she loves to hear the gospel; she is such a very poor old woman that nobody likes to invite her into a pew. I speak to the shame of such pride. She is one of Christ's saints, and saintship is a patent of nobility. If you sold a farm you might count the trees, but not the boughs and the leaves; but if you sold a jeweller's shop, you would count all the pins, and all the diamond rings, because everything is precious there; now God reckons everything about his people to be so precious that he even takes stock of the hairs of their heads. How precious in the sight of the Master his saints are! I have been trying to work out a calculation: if the hairs of their heads are worth so much that God registers them, what are their heads worth? Who shall tell me that? If their heads are worth so much that the Lord Jesus Christ died to redeem them, who can tell what their souls are worth, or rather what they are not worth? They are worth more than all the worlds put together. Ask a mother what her child is worth. "What will you take for your boy, mistress?" My friends, if she sold him at the price she would consider a fair compensation, we could not all of us make up the money if we put all that we have into one common fund. The Lord set such a value on *his* children that he gave his Son Jesus Christ to die sooner than he would lose one of them; and Jesus himself chose to die on the cross that none of his little ones should perish. Oh, the value and the preciousness of a child of God! Worlds would not serve for pence to be the basis of the valuation.

Let *us* prize the people of God very highly, feeling as the Psalmist did when he said, "O God, thou art my God: my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight." You please Jesus when you do good unto one of the least of these his children. He reckons that you have done it unto him. If they are so dear to him, let them be dear to you; and as some of those whom Christ has purchased with his blood are still lost—

> "O come, let us go and find them!
> In the paths of death they roam."

If the hairs of their head are counted, what must their souls be worth? Let us feel that all we can do to save a soul from death is but cheap work compared with the priceless gem we seek. O come, ye divers, plunge into the sea: the pearls ye bring up shall well repay your utmost risk and toil! Come, ye hunters after souls, there is no such chase as this! Hunt after souls as the brave Switzer chases the chamois upon the mountains, and let no difficulties daunt you, for "he that winneth souls is wise." There is no more profitable purchase than this, though you should lay down your lives to bring men to Christ. How much doth God value the souls of his people!

IV. Lastly, here is PRESERVATION. See how carefully God intends to preserve his own people, since he begins by counting the hairs of their heads. I say it, for there is Scripture at the back of my assertion, that none of the people of God shall suffer in the long run the smallest loss. "There shall not a hair of your head perish," said Christ to his believing people. If I were to lose a hair from my head, I should not know it—should you? But God would know if his servants lost a hair of their heads, and he makes the promise to them of such complete protection that there shall not a hair of their head perish. Remember that other text, "The Lord keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." Now, a Christian man may break the bones of his body, but in a real and spiritual sense he is free from such danger, God will keep him—ay, keep him to all eternity! "There shall not a hoof be left behind," said Moses to Pharaoh, and there shall not a bone, nor a piece of a bone of the ransomed be left in the dominion of death and the grave. When the trumpet shall sound, the whole of redeemed manhood shall start into life. When Peter came out of prison, the angel smote him, and his chains fell off, and he came out of prison, but he did not quit till he had put on his sandals. He did not leave even a pair of old shoes for Herod and his jailors. So shall it be with the children of God at last: "from beds of dust and silent clay," when the angel's trumpet shall ring out, they shall arise, and they shall leave nothing behind; they shall not leave an essential particle in the tomb. They shall rise, body, soul, and spirit completely redeemed of the Lord. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Christ knows what he has bought, and he will have it; even to the last atom he will have that which he has purchased. We shall not enter into life halt, or maimed, or having one eye. He will preserve his people in their entirety, and present them "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Observe that, in the close neighbourhood of the text, we read of persecution. Beloved, if persecution should come it cannot really harm you. The three Hebrew children, when they came out of the fire, were not scorched or singed; there was not the smell of fire upon their hats, their hosen, or their hair. When God's people pass through the fires of persecution, they shall not be losers; they shall go through the fires altogether unharmed; nay, they shall win the martyr's palm and crown, which shall make them glorious for ever, even if they die in the flames. Therefore, fear nothing. Nothing shall by any means harm you; in the end your sufferings shall be your enrichment. Though you count not your lives dear unto you, precious shall your blood be in his sight.

Besides persecution, there may come to you accident or sudden calamity. Never be afraid. It is half the battle in an accident, to exhibit presence of mind, therefore let the child of God be calm and self-possessed; for although you should suffer in body, your true self will be safe. Though in the tornado, or in the shipwreck, or in cholera, or in fire, you should be placed in outward peril even as others are, yet your real life is insured by the covenant of grace from all injury. Therefore, rest in the Lord, for you shall be safe though a thousand should fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right

hand. If you lose, your loss shall be transmuted into a real gain. Sickness, if sickness comes, shall work your health. God's children have often been ripened by sickness. They are like the sycamore fig, which never gets sweet until it is bruised. Amos was a bruiser of sycamore figs, and affliction is God's Amos to bruise us into sweetness. Maturity comes by affliction. Alas! you say, "I have lost a dear friend." Trust in God, and by divine friendship the void in your heart shall be more than filled. Have you lost a child? The Lord will be better to you than ten sons. Should your father and your mother be taken from you, you shall find them both in Christ, and be no orphan. Thus doth the promise stand: "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Trust, then, in the Lord at all hazards. Trust in him in deep waters as well as on the shore. When the waves are raging, trust your God as well as when the sea is as glass. When the sea roars, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, trust in Jehovah without the shade of a doubt, for "the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Wherefore should you fear? Your vessel carries Jesus and all his fortune. If *you* are drowned *he* cannot swim, he sinks or swims with you; for thus has he put it, "Because I live, ye shall live also." If your Lord lives, you must live. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words, and go quietly, patiently, happily, joyfully through the world, under divine preservation, since "the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

As for you who are not in Christ, I feel for you a great sorrow, because you cannot partake in the joy of this preservation. As for the righteous, the stars in their courses fight for them, and the beasts of the field are in league with them. But as for *you*, earth groans to bear the weight of such a sinner, and the elements are impatient to avenge th quarrel of God's covenant by destroying you. All things work together to bring upon you the justice which you provoke. Flee! Flee! Flee! You have but one friend left: flee to him! That friend, "the Friend of Sinners," entreats you to come to him. Hear him as he cries in tenderest accents, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Come to Jesus; come at once, for his dear love's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxxvii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—214, 208, 213.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

KNOWING THE LORD THROUGH PARDONED SIN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 29TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."—Jeremiah xxxi. 34.

TRUE knowledge of God is a covenant blessing. To know Jehovah as the only living and true God, to know him personally and intimately, so as to say with David, "Thou art my God"—this is one of the choice blessings of the covenant of grace which grace bestows upon all the chosen. In this prophecy, Jehovah declares that he will yet give this knowledge to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah; and this is our hope for the long-wandering seed of Abraham, whom he will yet restore and save.

If we regard the passage before us as instructive in its order, the knowledge of God follows close upon the application of the law to the heart. Read, "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people, ... and they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." The work of grace usually begins, so far as we can perceive it, by the Holy Spirit's bringing the law into contact with the inner man. The law outside of a man is forgotten; he may profess a reverence for it, but it does not affect his desires and thoughts. But when the Holy Spirit begins to put the law into the inward parts, the immediate result is the discovery of our shortcomings and transgressions. The more the man's heart sees the perfect holiness of the law of God, the more he perceives his own unholiness and impurity. He sets his own conduct in contrast with the divine righteousness, and he is overwhelmed with shame, sorrow, and dismay. He feels that if God should mark iniquities, he could not stand in his presence; yea more, that if the Lord at once condemned him, he would be just. Law-work is grace-work in its darker dress. It is the axe which rough-hews the timber which grace goes on to fashion and smooth. By the operation

of the law upon the conscience, convincing the man of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, the Holy Spirit works towards the transforming of the heart. He takes away the stone out of it, and makes it to be a fleshy, tender, sensitive thing. Then with his own finger he writes the divine law upon the mind and the affections, so that the divine commands become the centre of the man's life, and the governing force of his action. The man now loves that law which before he, at his very best, only feared: it becomes his will to do the will of God. By a miracle of grace his nature is changed, so that its tendencies, which were all towards evil, are corrected by new tendencies, which are all towards good. Now is the law of God indeed glorious, for it rules by love. It was terrible when written on those tablets of stone which Moses dashed to pieces; but its radiance is like that of a pearl most precious, when it gently influences our manhood from the central throne of the heart. It is now written on a tablet which will endure throughout eternity, for it is engraven upon an immortal spirit.

As the law is written on the heart, a manifestation is made of God himself. The man is made to know himself, to know God's law, and thus he is led to know the Lord. Now he acquaints himself with God, and is at peace.

Of this gracious knowledge of the Lord I am going to speak this morning. This is to be our first head—*the one essential knowledge:* "They all shall know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." The second head equally arises out of the text, it is *the one grand means of obtaining this essential knowledge.* The text tells us how this knowledge is imparted by the Lord: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." When we receive pardon from the hands of God, then we know him indeed; for, as Zacharias said in his song, our Lord Jesus has come "to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins."

I. To begin with, then, we have here, first of all, THE ONE ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE. It is a great truth that, "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." To know God is to live in the light. This knowledge brings with it trust, peace, love, holiness, and acceptance. Do not read this passage as some do, and tear it up by its roots, and then use it as if it were a prophecy of the universal spread of religion. Do not dream of a day when we shall not need to teach our brother and our neighbour the great truths of our holy faith: at any rate, the text before us says nothing of the kind. This prophecy is to be read as it stands, and in its own connection. In the first place, as we have already said, it relates to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. At the present time these have forgotten the Lord as to a true spiritual worship of him; for they have rejected the Messiah, in whose face God's glory is seen: this nation is to be brought back to its best estate; both portions of it shall be converted, and shall come under a new covenant of a very different tenor from that which their fathers so wantonly broke. The Lord will gather the remnant of Israel under a covenant of grace, by which he will work in them those things which under the old covenant he justly required of them. Under this covenant of grace they are to have their hearts inscribed with his law; Jehovah

is to be their God, and they are to be his people. Then shall they in very deed know the Lord as their fathers knew him in the days of Elijah, when the fire fell from heaven, and they cried, "Jehovah, he is the God. Jehovah, he is the God." Whatever else these converts shall not know, they shall know Jehovah, "from the least of them unto the greatest of them."

Refer the passage to the spiritual Israel, as you justly may, and you learn that when God deals with men in a way of grace, and impresses obedience upon their nature, then they all know him, from the least of them unto the greatest of them. The universality of the text extends to all those who come under the new covenant, and are renewed in heart; these without exception know the Lord, and there is no need that they be instructed upon that important point. These people know the Lord, and never can forget him: henceforth they are no more strangers to him, but sojourners with him.

Let us consider this knowledge, that we may see what it is. And to begin with; *it is emphatically the knowledge of God:* "They shall all know *me*." They may not know everything about God. Who could? Who knows the Lord in that sense but the Lord himself? Only the infinite can comprehend the infinite. The intellectual comprehension of the attributes of God is beyond us; how, then, could we grasp his essence? The regenerate, however, know the Lord, though they do not, and cannot, understand his incomprehensible glories. They may not know a great many things which they would like to know, critical, scientific, historical, theological, spiritual, and eternal; but these matters are not spoken of in this place. One form of knowledge is mentioned, and only one: "They shall all know *me*, saith Jehovah."

Observe, that the prophet speaks not of knowing facts about God, nor truths as to what God is, or has done, or will do—it is knowing God himself. Do you not perceive the difference? I may know, and I do know, a great deal about a certain renowned person; say, if you please, Prince Bismarck. I have read his biography, and I think I have some sort of an idea of his personal character: thus I know something about him. But if you were to ask me, "Do you know him?" I should at once answer, "No, I have not even seen him, I have never spoken with him, nor written to him, nor held any other communication with him; and therefore I cannot say that I know him." Now, if this solemn question were passed round these pews, "Do you know God?" how would you answer it? Many would reply, "We have read the Scriptures, and so we know the attributes of God, and we remember with great reverence all that God has done, and promised to do; but still we cannot say that we know him. Can any one say as much as that?" Let me break up the question—Have you ever spoken with God? Did he ever speak with you? Believers can say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father"; can you say *that?* Were you ever conscious of the presence of God? Has he ever manifested himself to you in any special way? Alas! many a very knowing man must honestly confess that he does not know the Lord in the sense contained in my questions. Even among professing Christians this may be sadly true; even as Paul said to the Corinthians: "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God:

I speak this to your shame." The knowledge here spoken of is to know the Lord himself: not to know that there is a God, and that Jehovah alone is God, and that he is to be had in reverence of them that are round about him; but to know *him*. We have such a tendency to run away from the personality of God. Take an instance: godly people say, "I know in whom I have believed"; but this is not what Paul said. He declared, "I know whom I have believed." He knew the person he trusted. He was personally acquainted with Jesus Christ. This is true godliness: personal acquaintance with a personal God. This is a grand support of faith. One said to a Christian lady that he did not believe in the Scriptures, and she replied that she believed in them, and delighted to read them. When asked her reason, she replied, "Perhaps it is because I know the author." Personal acquaintance with God turns faith into assurance. The knowledge of God is the basis of a faith of the surest and sweetest kind: we know and have believed the love which God hath towards us. Knowing God, we believe in the truth of his words, the justice of his sentences, the goodness of his acts, the wisdom of his purposes, yea, and the love of his chastisements. When a renewed heart truly knows God, it has no further quarrel with him, or with anything that he does or says. The cry is, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Thus to know God is eternal life. Let us return to the question—Do we know the Lord? Hearken, my hearer. Has the Lord ever been so near you as to make you say, "How dreadful is this place"? Did your flesh ever tremble, and your lips quiver, at his voice? Do you know the feeling which overcame the prophet Habakkuk when he trembled in himself? Then I know that you are sure beyond all other certainty of your previous life, that God is, and that he deals with men. Do you know the Lord in this way? I put this question to each one. Hast thou ever spoken to him? Is it thy habit to open thy heart to him? Dost thou tell him all thy secrets? I mean by this nothing bordering on fanaticism or superstition; but in sober earnestness I ask—Is God real to thee? Is he as real to thee as she that lieth in thy bosom, or as the friend who walketh with thee by the way? Is the invisible God as real to thee as any person that thou canst see, as much an actual fact as any substance which thou canst feel? Has the Lord ever spoken to thy soul? I will not put any special question about the medium of that speech. It may be, he has spoken through this Book, or through his minister, or by "a still small voice" within thy soul:—but has the Eternal One ever spoken with thee? O my hearers, are you on speaking terms with your God? If not, you cannot be said to know him; and if you do not know him, you are not among the renewed in heart; for of them the Lord saith in this Scripture, "They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."

Note, dear friends, in the next place, that it is *a personal knowledge*. Each renewed person knows the Lord for himself. You cannot know God except for yourself. If I am asked whether I know such a person, it would be idle to answer, "Well, my brother knows him." That would be an admission that I did not myself know him. If the question were repeated, "Do *you* know him?" it would be folly to reply,

"Well, I have a cousin who sometimes dines with him." That is not the question. So with regard to God. No second-hand knowledge can be admitted here. You cannot know God through other people; and why should you wish to do so? Is not personal knowledge the most to be desired? Did not Job rejoice that when he should rise from the dead he should behold his Redeemer; and this was the essence of his joy—"Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." He would not have wished to see his Redeemer with another's eyes, nor that the vision should be his only by proxy. It is for our own lips to drink at the fountain-head of love, and for our own eyes to look unto the Lord. No imaginary reception of grace by a sponsor can save, or even satisfy. You cannot see God with another man's eyes; you cannot know God through another man's knowledge. O my hearers, ye must yourselves be born again! Ye must yourselves be made pure in heart, or you cannot see God. Personal religion, and individual knowledge of God, are indispensable. Come, my hearer, what hast thou to say to this?

Next, this knowledge is one which is *wrought in us by the Spirit of the Lord.* It is the duty of every Christian man to say to his neighbour, and to his brother, "Know the Lord." It is the instinct of a new-born child of God to try and tell out what he knows. God uses this effort as his instrumentality for saving men. But the man who really knows the Lord, does not know him solely by such instruction. This may be the means used, but the knowledge obtained comes from a higher source than brother or neighbour. All Zion's children are taught of the Lord. They know God by his revealing himself to them. Thou mayest know what the preacher can tell thee, and yet thou mayest know nothing aright. Thou mayest know what this Book can tell thee, and yet if the Holy Spirit has not quickened thee to perceive the living truth within the Book, thou knowest nothing truly. We may stand and preach, dear friends, until our tongues are worn away, and this inspired page may lie open before you until the ink is blanched, and yet you, hearers and readers, may never know the Lord; yea, I am sure you never will unless the Spirit shall show him unto you. You cannot know a man by hearing and reading of him, you must deal with himself. God through himself you must each one know; there is no other way of truly knowing him. When Peter confessed Christ, you remember how the Lord Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." You may know a great deal intellectually by the teaching of men; but heart knowledge, the knowledge which is peculiar to God's elect, you can never receive except by the teaching of the Lord. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "He shall teach you all things." Is not that a fulfilment of the old promise, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord"? Those whom God teaches are taught indeed; but neither nature, nor art, nor the will of man, can supply the place of this heavenly instruction.

Beloved, true believers *know* God, because God has revealed himself to them. Let me assure you, the receivers of this personal teaching cannot be bamboozled by the doubts and denials of men. False prophets would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect; but it is not possible

that the elect should be deceived; for they have internal evidence which carnal reason cannot shake. They commune with the Most High God, and the secret of the Lord is with them, and consequently their hearts are fixed. What we have heard and seen we testify, and if men receive not our witness, it is none the less sure to our own hearts.

It is not possible for our faith to be destroyed if it be indeed the work of the Holy Ghost; for that which God doeth shall be for ever. The faith your mother gave you your stepmother may take away from you; the religion which you inherited from your father may be sold off with the old furniture of the house: that which man gives, man may take away. But that which the Holy Ghost implants in us, all the devils in hell cannot pluck up. The inscription of the Spirit of God upon that heart which he has turned into flesh it is not possible for all the powers of darkness to erase. Knowledge given by the Spirit is clear, definite, personal, assured, positive, and therefore precious. We grow more and more persuaded as our experience ripens.

The truth which has been burned into us as with a red-hot iron by the operations of the Spirit of God becomes a vital portion of ourselves.

Note carefully, that this knowledge of God becomes *manifest knowledge*. It is so manifest that the most earnest workers who desire the conversion of their fellow-men no longer say to such a man, "Know the Lord," for they perceive most clearly that he already possesses that knowledge, so as to be beyond the need of instruction upon that point.

There are many truths, beloved brethren, which I feel always bound to teach to you so long as I am the pastor of this flock; but if I had an unmixed company gathered here of regenerated men and women, I should not think of saying to you, "Know the Lord"; for I should be sure that you all knew him, from the least even to the greatest. We assume the presence of this knowledge when we preach to God's people: we take it for granted that they know the Lord, and, therefore, we do not again lay this foundation. A godly man's life is such that we perceive that he knows the Lord. The absence of this becomes equally clear in many of the ungodly. When men commit a crime, the indictment often runs, "not having the fear of God before his eyes." You can tell when a man has not the fear of God before his eyes, and you can tell when a man has that fear of God. Brethren, if you watch him, and especially if you live with him, you will perceive when a person has a knowledge of God. A mighty something operates upon him, checking or stimulating, cheering or calming him. Hear him as he wrestles in prayer. Stand outside the door, and you will soon perceive that an invisible One is with him. This unseen somebody is everybody to this man, and you can see it. Mark him when he gets into trade. He might take an unfair advantage; but he scorns it. Does he not want money? Yes, badly. But he has respect to One whom others cannot see. By a word of falsehood he might profit largely; he will not speak it. Why? "So did not I, because of the fear of the Lord." All who have been renewed in spirit, and have had God's law written upon the fleshy tablets of their heart, manifest to a greater or less degree that they

know the Lord, and therefore their brethren perceive it, and cease to teach them what they are sure they know.

Next, *this knowledge of God is universal among the regenerate.* It is not universal among the sons of Adam, for multitudes know not God, and have no dealings with him! But all those who are under the covenant of grace know the Lord. Brethren, it would be a doubtful child that did not know its own father. All the boys and girls at home differ in knowledge; the big boy is going to the university soon, and the eldest girl has taken a degree at the Oxford Examination; but yonder little child who does not know his letters yet, still knows his father. Does he not? Oh, how glad he is when father comes home in the evening! Yes, and God's children know their Father. Moreover, we all know the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. Whatever else I do not know, I can say—

> "Jesus, my God, I know his name;
> His name is all my trust."

We know Jesus himself, and dwell in him! We also know the Spirit of God. He has opened our eyes. He is our Comforter. He it is that brings us near to God. Thus we know, personally, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. There is no exception to this rule in all the family of love. The prophet says they shall all know him, from the least to the greatest; that is to say, from the new-born believer up to the full-grown saint, they all know the Lord. The descriptions given may relate to their littleness or greatness in grace; or they may refer to their littleness or greatness in ability, position, or usefulness; but they all know the Lord. The regenerate man with one talent knows the Lord; the man with ten talents boasts not of them, but rejoices that he knows the Lord.

This is the distinguishing mark of the regenerate, that they know the Lord. Every grace that the Spirit has wrought in them shows this. Faith is the special mark of God's people; but how shall they believe in him whom they do not know? "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee": thus their knowledge of God is the basis of their faith in him. All God's people love him supremely; but we cannot love a God whom we do not know. In proportion as our knowledge increases towards God, our love to him burns more and more brightly. God is our hope, our confidence, our expectation: but we can have no hope in an unknown God. The knowledge of God lies at the bottom of every virtue and grace. The Lord is no more to us a stranger of whom we have heard—of whom a report has come to us through many hands. No; the Lord God is our Friend. We hold high converse with him every day; we walk with him; we delight in him; he is our exceeding joy. This, in a large degree, is true of all those with whom the grace of God has dealt, to bring them under his covenant, and to give them new hearts and right spirits—they all know the Lord from the least even unto the greatest.

II. And this leads me to the second point, whereon I ask your earnest attention: THE ONE GRAND MEANS OF OBTAINING THIS KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. Here it is:—"For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Do you catch the idea? The clearest

knowledge of God comes out of pardoned sin. The most distinct, vivid, assured knowledge of Jehovah comes to us when our iniquity is blotted out, and our sin is covered.

Just think a little. *Without the pardon of sin it is not possible for us to know the Lord.* We run away from him; we do not want to know him. Like father Adam, we hide away among the trees of the garden; we do not desire to see our Maker; for we have offended him. The thought of God is distasteful to every guilty man. It would be good news to him if he could be informed, on sure authority, that there was no God at all. He cannot know God, because his whole heart, and mind, and spirit are in such a state that he is incapable of knowing and appreciating the Holy One of Israel. Darkness covers the mind, because sin has blinded the soul to all that is best and holiest. The lover of sin does not know God, and does not want to know him.

While sin lieth at the door, there is a difficulty on God's part, too. How can he admit into an intimate knowledge of himself the guilty man, as long as he is enamoured of evil? Shall the great king entertain rebels? Shall two walk together, except they be agreed? "God is angry with the wicked every day." He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Hence the guilty man is, by reason of his own impurity of nature, and by reason of the holy nature of God, shut out from all knowledge of God.

Beyond this, an awful dread comes over the guilty mind, even when it begins to be awakened. Conscience testifies that God must punish sin. It matters not what controversy may be raised over that question; conscience, which makes cowards of us all, assures us that sin cannot go unpunished. I have heard a great many arguments about the future of the impenitent, but I am sure of this, that God has ingrained it in our nature to believe that he will not spare the guilty. Down deep in the soul of the most hardened unbeliever there is that conviction. You have only to let him lie long enough on a sick-bed and gaze into eternity, and he is forced to confess it, whether he likes to do so or not. Now, while that dread is on a man he does not want to know God, and he even becomes incapable of knowing him. But as the prodigal best knew his father when he had been received in love, so does man best know God when his sin is put away. When sin is forgiven communion is commenced: sin is the great stone which lieth at the door, and when this is rolled away we enter in and see God.

But, beloved, we now speak a matter which we have proved by experience—*in the pardon of sin there is made to the pardoned man a clear and unmistakable revelation of God to his own soul.* I venture to say that there is a clearer revelation of God to the individual in the forgiveness of his sin than can be found anywhere else. God is to be seen in nature. Who among us would wish to question it? Walk abroad, and look around you, and above you, and behold your God! But while men are under the dominion of sin, nature does not reveal God to them; their eyes are holden, and they will not perceive him. The most eminent students of nature have some of them remained without the discovery of a God. The same is true of providence. God comes very close to many men by preserving their lives from imminent

peril, or by providing them with things necessary in the moment of great need; and yet we have known men living in the centre of wondrous providences, and they have only thought themselves lucky fellows, or clever persons, and so have traced God's mercy to chance or self. And let me go a little further. The revelation which God has made in this Holy Book, though it is an eminently clear and heavenly revelation, does not bring the personal assurance to men which comes by pardon of sin. Many have read the book from their childhood, and know large portions of it by heart, and yet they have never seen God in his own Word. But let me tell you, if you have ever felt the guilt and burden of sin, and God has come to you and brought you to the Saviour's feet, and you have looked up and seen the great Sacrifice, and put your trust in him, and the Spirit has borne witness with your spirit that your sins and your iniquities have been forgiven you—then you know the Lord with emphasis and beyond all doubt. In such a discovery of the Godhead there is a joyful conviction, an absolute certainty, a more than mathematical demonstration. The knowledge of God received by a distinct sense of pardoned sin is more certain than knowledge derived by the use of the senses in things pertaining to this life.

This personal manifestation has about it a singular glory of overwhelming self-evidence. Did you ever notice, when reading the Scripture, how sometimes God makes the pardon of sin the proof of his Deity? In the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah you will see how God, through the prophet, laughs at the false gods. He makes sport of the wooden deities. "The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule: he marketh it out with a line." All this is sacred sarcasm against the false gods. But when Jehovah comes to prove that he is the true God, what says he? Read verse 22 of that same chapter:—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Here he does not quote the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor the working of miracles of power; but to a sinful people he makes this the master proof: "I have blotted out thy sins." Did any of the gods of the heathen forgive sins? These things that are made of carved work and gilt by the carpenter and the goldsmith, did they ever blot out iniquity? Did they ever pretend to do so? Jehovah's Godhead is proved by his forgiveness of sin; and it is so proved to all who receive that pardon.

Look again, and see how God calls men to himself to receive salvation because he is God. See Isaiah xlv. 22: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." He alone is God, and therefore they are bidden to look to him for salvation. As he proved his Godhead by salvation, so now he proves salvation by his Godhead. The two are bound up in one bundle. Let the burdened sinner see how they are joined together.

In the thirty-third chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, let me read to you concerning Manasseh, who had shed innocent blood very much: "Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the

host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. *Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.*" When Jehovah pardoned him, then the great sinner knew that Jehovah was God. There is no evidence like it. Infinite mercy personally received is a demonstration of the Godhead.

The church of God, when she was in her praiseful frame of mind, and full of joy, what think you was her song? Micah vii. 18 gives it to us:—"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Hallelujah! Who is a God like unto thee? We wonder more at the God of pardons than at the God of thunders. There is a more vivid apprehension of the Godhead in obtaining mercy than in beholding works of power.

Beloved, you must bear with me a minute or two while I speak upon this delightful theme. I should just like a week in which to preach from this text, and then I should need another month. How a man sees God when he comes to know in his own soul *the fulness of pardon* intended by this matchless word, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"! Can this be so? Does the Lord make a clean sweep of all my sins? Can it be that the Lord has cast them all behind his back? Has he blotted out the record which accused me? Has he cast my sin into the depths of the sea? Hallelujah! He is a God indeed. This is a God-like act. O Jehovah! who is like unto thee? When I know my sin to be forgiven, I need no one to say to me, "Know the Lord": the fulness of his pardon has made him known.

Mark, also, *how freely*, out of his mere love, the Lord forgives, and herein displays his Godhead! No payment on our part, of suffering or service, is required. The Lord pardons for his own name's sake. He blots out sin because he delights in mercy. This is like a God. I know him, I rejoice in him, since he has so freely pardoned me.

When the soul comes to think of *the method of mercy*, it has a further knowledge of God. There is a great point in this. Conscience inquires—"If God forgives me, can he do it justly? Can he forgive consistently with his character and his position as the great moral Governor?" We see that he has set forth a propitiation, that he has provided a great sacrifice by which he can be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth. Herein is wisdom. We spell over the revelation, even the word *substitution*. Jesus was made a curse for us. Then we cry out, "Oh, the wisdom of God!" In the extraordinary plan of salvation by grace through Christ Jesus, all the divine attributes are set in a glorious light, and God is made known as never before. Oh, the splendour of redeeming love! Does not every soul that knows the mystery of the cross know the Lord? Jesus says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Brethren, do not forget the great love which, when the plan was struck out, provided the august person for the working out of that plan? "He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." When I think that the God who was offended by sin was himself the sufferer on its account, my thoughts of God are raised far above any height to which the interesting facts of science have elevated them. As I see God in nature, I reverence him; as I see him in providence, I adore him; as I see him in Christ Jesus, pardoning my sin, I know him.

If you just turn my text over a little, you will perceive another truth: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." To my mind, *the immutability of divine pardon* is one of the most brilliant facets of the diamond. Some think that God forgives, but afterwards punishes; that you may be justified to-day, but condemned to-morrow. Such is not the teaching of our text. God does not play fast and loose with pardon in that fashion. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." He will not recollect one of them; they are gone clean out of the divine memory. Of course, it is a figure of speech, since in a certain sense God cannot forget; but as he says that he will not remember, I am content to believe him. The Lord looks upon the forgiven one as if he had never sinned. Our debts are so fully paid by our Lord Jesus, that there is not an account upon the file of omniscience against any pardoned one. God himself cannot recall his people's sin; for he vows that he will remember it no more. Remember how the Lord hath said, "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." If you know this irreversible pardon, my brethren, you know the Lord better than you will ever know him through gazing at the stars, or cutting through the rocks to the centre of the globe. This to you is a manifestation of God of a more powerful and effectual sort than all that you will ever read of or hear of from your fellow-men. If the Lord God this morning not only permits me to speak to you, but if he himself by his own Spirit applies the pardoning blood of Jesus to you, so that you enjoy a sense of reconciliation, this will put all gospel matters beyond the wash of doubt; no wave of question can come up so far. If you are made by the Spirit to know that you are accepted in the Beloved—if a sense of that acceptance comes streaming into your soul just as yonder sunshine pours through that window, you will say to yourself, I do indeed know the Lord. That heavenly joy, that "peace of God" will bring to you a full assurance which nothing can disturb. Arguments, words, reasons—these are all the froth of the pot; but real contact with God and conscious enjoyment of the peace-giving power of the Holy Ghost, these are solid food for souls. If God deal with thee, my brother, and thou knowest him, this is sure knowledge. Neither time with its lapse, nor suffering with its fret, nor doubt with its venom, nor death with its terrors, can take from you that certainty of faith which comes with the pardon of sin. If you do not know the Lord by his personal manifestation of himself in pardoning your sin, I do not wonder that you are easily

turned about by every wind of doctrine; but if you do know the Lord by his appearing to you in grace, you are beyond the short-range guns of the enemy. Our memories must fail us, and our senses must leave us before we can doubt the glorious Godhead of our Jehovah. We may be beaten in argument by the sophistries of the new theologians; but we cling to the facts of our experience, and cannot be parted from them. When the God of the Old Testament is decried, we glory in him, saying, "He has pardoned my sin, and thus he has proved himself to be God indeed." Our opponents may turn round and say, "That is no argument to us"; we only reply, "We dare say it is not; but it is argument enough for us, and we must leave you to judge for yourselves. If you will not believe our testimony, we are clear." May the Lord renew to our souls, from day to day, our sense of pardoned sin, and we shall be happily established in his faith and fear, whatever others may have to say. Oh, how I desire that all my hearers may seek and find this sin-pardoning God in Christ Jesus! Look to your Saviour hanging on the tree, bearing the curse that you might be blessed. Look, I say, and you also shall know the Lord. The Lord help you: Amen, and amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxiii.; Jeremiah xxxi. 31—37.

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"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 5TH, 1888, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."—Revelation ii. 12, 13.

YOUR attention will be principally asked to these words—"Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."

Specially note, dear friends, at the opening of this morning's meditation, the character under which the Lord Jesus Christ presents himself to the church at Pergamos. "These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges." Does the Lord Jesus come to his church in that way? Does he at the door of the church bear a sword? a sword unscabbarded? a sharp sword? a sharp sword with two edges? Yes, even to his visible church this is how our Lord Jesus Christ appears. To his own spiritual and faithful ones he is to each one a husband, full of unutterable tenderness and love; but to the visible church, which at its best estate is never altogether pure, he appears in severer form. To a church he comes as Captain of the Lord's host, and he wields a sharp sword with two edges. It is the parallel of that passage where John the Baptist saith of him: "His fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and he will gather his wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." That winnowing fan is never out of his hand, for it is always needed. Even though our Lord is full of grace, he is also full of truth. His love to his servants manifests itself in a burning jealousy which will not endure evil. "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." We think of the coming of our Lord as a joy and a blessing; but, oh, remember that question, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" The Lord bears the sword, and he beareth it not in vain. Time has not blunted its edge, it is "sharp"; and it hath two edges, as of old.

But what will he do with that sword in reference to a church? We

are not left in any doubt upon that point. Having mentioned some whose doctrines and lives were unclean, the Lord says, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." He turns the sword against those within the church who had no right to be there. It is no trifling thing to be a church member. I could earnestly wish that certain professors had never been members of a church at all; for if they had been outside the church, they might have been in far less peril than they are within its bounds. Outside their conduct might have been tolerated; but it is not consistent with an avowal of discipleship towards Jesus. I say this with deep sorrow. O false professors, you may go down to hell readily enough without increasing your damnation by coming into Christ's church with a lie in your right hand. Alas for those who are not Christians in heart, and yet profess to be so! Such ought to be startled by the vision of the Lord himself drawing near to a church with a sharp sword in his hand. Surely, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites."

Yet is there comfort to the sincere in this glorious man of war. He will smite those who are the enemies of his holy cause, but he will also beat off those who attack his people from without. His sword is for the defence of the faithful. It is drawn from its sheath to protect the timid and the trembling. Jesus is come as our Joshua, to chase the enemy before us, and lead us onward, conquering and to conquer. The sword with two edges is the defender of the least of those whose hearts are right before the Lord. I introduce the subject as the Spirit himself introduces it. I would make the sermon sweet to the saints, but the preface must needs be sharp, lest any seize upon comforts to which they have no right. The Paschal Lamb is always to be eaten with bitter herbs: those bitter herbs I have set upon the table. The name of Jesus, which is the song of angels and the treasure of saints, has terror in it to those who refuse him; for he who bears that name shall judge the quick and dead, and pronounce condemnation on the unrighteous.

Notice that this blessed Saviour watches his church with an observant eye. He looks at the church in Pergamos, and he says, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." The Lord sees the position and the peril of the church at Pergamos, "where Satan dwelleth." Probably there were horrible idolatries, with obscene orgies in the city, or it may have been a place of peculiar licentiousness, or of special persecution. We cannot at this distance of time exactly tell what it was; but the Lord regarded it as the citadel of Satan. There are places in the world at this day where sin has so much the upper hand, or where error and unbelief reign so supreme, that the devil would seem to have there taken up his residence, and to have made it his capital city. This is a trying neighbourhood for a church of Christ, and yet it is the place where it is most wanted. You, dear friend, may be living in society where the evil one rules with undisputed sway. You are not favoured to dwell with your fellow Christians, but you go home to be met with blasphemies at the door; and all the week sights and sounds assail your eyes and ears which make you feel like Lot in Sodom. I am sorry for you; but let it comfort you that your Lord knows all about it,

and he can either remove you from the trying position, or else he can still more glorify his grace by supporting you in it, and enabling you to overcome the enemy. He knows that "Satan desires to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"; and he prays for you that your faith fail not. He knows your perils, and he considers your trials. Right well he perceives the way in which Satan would first mislead you, and then accuse you. The subtlety of the old serpent he understands. He sees your struggles, your failures, and your desperate endeavours to hold fast the faith. He knows how at night you are grieved as you make confession before him of your shortcomings; but he knows also the peculiar circumstances in which you are placed, and he judges you in great mercy. If you are holding fast his name and have not denied the faith, even *that* may be to him a surer proof of your truthfulness of heart than works of labour and patience might be in other instances. You have borne fewer clusters than another vine, but Jesus knows that you grow in a very barren bit of ground, and he thinks well of your little fruit. Your day's work does not look much when it is done, but when horses plough a rock so hard that it breaks the ploughshare, no husbandman expects so much to be done as when a light loam has to be gently turned over. The Lord Jesus takes all our surroundings into consideration, and though he loves us too well to make excuse for our sins, yet he himself mentions the circumstances which make our act to be rather failure than fault, even as he did for the first disciples when he found them asleep, and he said, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." O dear children of God, if you are placed in positions of peculiar trial and difficulty, and if your hindrances are so many that you cannot accomplish one-tenth as much as you desire, then hear how Jesus puts it: "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." If you are faithful to your Lord, and firm in his truth, he will commend you and say, "Yet thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." I wonder whether this word of comfort is meant for somebody here, or for some friend who will read the sermon. I feel that it must be so. Many of our Lord's beloved ones are, in God's sight, now doing much more, under distressing circumstances, than they used to do in happier days. When they had ten pounds entrusted to them, they brought in two by way of interest; and now that they have only one pound, they bring in one pound of interest: thus you see that they produce a far larger percentage than they used to do; and this is the Lord's way of calculating, for it is according to righteousness. When we have little strength, and are placed in positions of great difficulty, then the Lord thinks all the more of what we produce, and regards it as all the surer proof of fidelity. In the text it is commendation enough for Pergamos, under the circumstances that, dwelling so close to Beelzebub's own capital, close under the shadow of the throne of hell, that church could earn this praise: "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."

Let us give earnest attention to this commendation. Oh, that we may earn it ourselves; and if we have already earned it, may we be helped by the Holy Spirit to hold it fast, so that no man take our crown!

I. The first head will be, LET US CONSIDER THIS FACT. I hope it is a fact with many here present as surely as it was a fact with Pergamos. I trust it can be said of this church and of its members —"Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."

Notice, dear friends, that *the name of Christ is here made to be identical with the faith of Christ.* "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." The faith of Scripture has Christ for its centre, Christ for its circumference, and Christ for its substance. The name—that is, the person, the character, the work, the teaching of Christ—this is the faith of Christians. The great doctrines of the gospel are all intimately connected with the Lord Jesus Christ himself: they are the rays, and he is the sun. We never hold the faith correctly except as we see the Lord Jesus to be the centre of it. From our election onward to our glorification, Christ is all and in all. To the Jews the law was never in its proper place until it was laid in the ark, and covered with the mercy seat; and I am sure believers never see the law aright till they see it fulfilled in Christ Jesus. If it be so with the law, how much more is it so with the gospel? The gospel is the gold ring, but Christ Jesus is the diamond which is set in it. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith: he is the sum and substance, the top and bottom of it. When we hold fast the name of our Lord, then we have not denied the faith.

But *how may the faith be denied?* In several ways this may be done. Let me say it very tenderly, but very solemnly, some deny the faith, and let go the name of Jesus *by never confessing it.* Remember how the Lord puts this matter in the gospels: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Here it is clear that to deny is the same thing as not confessing. I know people who almost boast of their neutrality. They say, "I hold my tongue. Though the conflict should lie between Christ and Belial, yet I would go quietly on and never involve myself." Say you so? Then permit me to remind you of our Lord's own words. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Again he says, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." This text must bear hard upon those who have tried not exactly to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, but neither to hold with the hare nor yet to run with the hounds. These have hoped to find in their discretion the better part of valour; but, believe me, it is a valour which will be rewarded with everlasting contempt. This way you hope to lead an easy life. An easy life of such a kind will end in a very uneasy death. A life in which we have shunned the cross of Christ will lead to a state in which we shall miss the crown of glory.

Christ is also denied *by false doctrine.* If we espouse error as to his person, work, or doctrine, and believe what Jesus did not teach, and refuse to believe what Jesus did teach, then we have denied his name and his faith. One of the main points of a Christian, without which the rest of his life will not be acceptable with God, is that Jesus shall be to him "the way, the truth, and the life." The practical, the doctrinal, the experimental must all be found by us

in Jesus Christ our Lord, or else we have not placed him in his right position; and we cannot be right anywhere unless the centre is right, and unless Jesus is that centre. God grant that we may never turn aside from the faith once for all delivered to the saints; but may we resist all false philosophies, steadfast and immovable!

But then it is very possible to deny the name and the faith *by unholy living*. Let none of us imagine that an orthodox creed can be of any use to us if we lead a heterodox life. No, Christ Jesus is to be obeyed as a Master, as well as to be believed as a Teacher. The disciple is to be practically obedient, as well as attentively teachable. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The apostle Paul somewhere says, "He that careth not for his own household hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (or unbeliever)"; so that a moral fault may be a denial of the faith, and may make a man worse than if he had never professed to believe at all. God save us from an unholy life!

Alas! we can deny the faith *by actually forsaking it*, and quitting the people of God. Some do so deliberately, and others because the charms of the world overcome them. We are told of some who went away from our Lord because of what he had taught. They cried, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" My friends, if you are not prepared to accept hard sayings, you need not profess to be disciples of Jesus. "Horrible doctrine!" cried one the other day. Granted that it is horrible, may it not also be true? Many horrible things take place around us, and yet none can deny the facts. You cannot exclude from your knowledge many things which are true, by merely crying, "Horrible!" It is not ours to judge of our Lord's teaching by our sentiment, we are to receive it by faith. He speaks terribly of the doom of the wicked, and he is not capable of exaggeration. What the Lord Jesus says is certain, for "he is the faithful and true witness," and therefore we will not turn from him, whatever his teaching may be. Oh for grace to persevere to the end! Oh for fidelity and constancy, so that neither gain nor loss, exaltation nor depression, may induce us to quit our Saviour! Let us hold fast his sacred name, and never deny the faith, come what may. May the Holy Spirit hold us fast, that we may hold fast the name of Jesus!

In what way may we be said to hold fast the name of Christ and the faith of Christ? I answer, *by the full consent of our intellect*, yielding up our mind to consider and accept the things which are assuredly believed among us. We hold fast the form of sound words, and accept whatsoever God has revealed, because he has revealed it. Our motto is, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." When Christ speaks, we assent with our minds and consent with our hearts to all he declares.

If we hold fast the name of Jesus, we must hold the faith *in the love of it*. We must store up in our affections all that our Lord teaches. His words are found, and we do eat them, they are as honey to the taste. Let Jesus speak, and I will reply, "Yea, Lord, thou sayest it is so, and I know it is so. I consent to thy teaching, and from my soul I love thee, and accept all that thou dost reveal." For the

doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture the true believer would live or die. This love of the heart is that which causes us to hold fast the name of Christ.

We also hold it fast *by holding it forth* in the teeth of all opposition. We must confess the faith at all proper times and seasons, and we must never hide our colours. There are times when we must dash to the front and court the encounter, when we see that our Captain's honour demands it. Let us never be either ashamed or afraid. Our Lord Jesus deserves that we should yield ourselves as willing sacrifices in defence of his faith. Ease, reputation, life itself, must go for the name and faith of Jesus. If in the heat of the battle our good name or our life must be risked to win the victory, then let us say, "In this battle some of us must fall; why should not I? I will take part and lot with my Master, and bear reproach for his sake." Only brave soldiers are worthy of our great Lord. Those who sneak into the rear, that they may be comfortable, are not worthy of the kingdom. What will our Captain say of cowards in that day when he distributes rewards to his faithful ones? Brethren, we must be willing to bear ridicule for Christ's sake, even that peculiarly envenomed ridicule which "the cultured" are so apt to pour upon us. We must be willing to be thought great fools for Jesus' sake. Some of us have forgotten more than many of our opponents ever knew, and yet they style us ignorant; we are bearing shame because we have the courage of our convictions, and yet they call us cowards. For my part, I am willing to be ten thousand fools in one for my dear Lord and Master, and count it to be the highest honour that can be put upon me to be stripped of every honour, and loaded with every censure for the sake of the grand old truth which is written on my very heart. Those ships which sail with Jesus as their Lord High Admiral must look for tempests; for his barque was filled with the waves, and began to sink. Doth that man love his Lord who would be willing to see Jesus wearing a crown of thorns, while for himself he craves a chaplet of laurel? Shall Jesus ascend to his throne by the cross, and do we expect to be carried there on the shoulders of applauding crowds? Be not so vain in your imagination. Count you the cost, and if you are not willing to bear Christ's cross, go away to your farm and to your merchandise, and make the most of them; only let me whisper this in your ear, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

II. In the second place, having considered the fact, LET US FURTHER ENLARGE UPON IT.

What do we mean by holding fast the name of Christ? I reply, first, we mean *holding fast the Deity of that name.* We believe in our Lord's real Godhead. "His name shall be called Wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God." One of the names by which he is revealed to us is Immanuel. The word "El" is one of the great Oriental names of God. You get in Hebrew Elohim, and in Arabic "Allah." Our Lord Jesus is Immanu-*el*, that is, God with us; and we believe him to be so. He is as truly man as any one among us; born of a virgin without taint of original sin. But he is also most surely God without the least diminution of the perfections and glories of Godhead. We put our finger into the print of the nails, but as we

do so we cry, "My Lord, and my God." "Let all the angels of God worship him." "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." We can never give up our belief in the Godhead of our Lord Jesus, but we must and will hold fast the faith of the Deity of Christ.

We also hold fast the name of Jesus, and the faith of Jesus, as *to the royalty of his name.* He was born King of the Jews, and he is also "King of kings, and Lord of lords." That which Pilate wrote over his cross is true—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"; but God also hath highly exalted him, and made him to have dominion over all the works of his hands. The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. He shall put down all rule, and all authority and power, for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever: Hallelujah"! When we bow the knee in prayer, and say, "Thy kingdom come," we mean the kingdom of God, and we mean also the kingdom of Christ Jesus, He it is that as a Lamb is seen in the midst of the throne where saints and angels pay adoring homage. Soon shall the seventh angel sound his trumpet, and great voices shall be heard in heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." O Jesus, we bow before thee! "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." He reigns in our hearts over the triple kingdom of our nature. He is King in our families; we desire to see him King in this city, King in this nation, King over all the earth; and we shall never be satisfied till, with all the redeemed of our race, we crown him Lord of all. We hold fast the royalty of the name of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, we believe in *the grandeur of that name,* as being the first and the last. Open the New Testament, and read the first verse of Matthew. How does it begin? "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David." The book of the New Covenant begins with Jesus. Now look at the last verse, see how the Testament ends: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Jesus Christ appears in the first verse, and he appears in the last verse. Did he not say, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending"? The first line of the covenant of grace is Jesus Christ; the last line of the covenant of grace is Jesus Christ; and all in between is the Lord Jesus Christ. Begin with him as A, go right through to B, C, D, E, F, and so on till you end with Z, and it is all Christ Jesus. He is all; yea, he is all in all. Oh what blessings have come to us through Jesus Christ! Through his name we have received remission of sins, in his name we are justified, in his name we are sanctified, in his name we shall be glorified, even as in him we were chosen from before the foundation of the world. My tongue can never tell you even the commencement of his greatness. Who shall declare his generation? The fringe, the hem of his infinite glories, who can touch? He is unspeakable. As for his glory, I may say, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." All glory and honour be unto

him in whom are comprehended all the blessings whereby God hath enriched his people in time and in eternity.

We hold fast the name of Christ as we believe in its saving power. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." We hold fast the belief that Jesus saves us from the guilt of sin by having borne it in his own body on the tree. We are assured that he makes us just before God by that righteousness of his, which is ours, because we are one with him. He saves us from the punishment of sin because "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." He died as a victim in our stead. He saves us from the power of sin by his Spirit, and by faith in his death: we overcome sin by the blood of the Lamb. Salvation in every department, salvation from its hopeful dawning to its glorious noontide in perfection, is all of Christ Jesus. He is Saviour, and he alone. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." He is the unique Saviour, there is no other possible salvation now or in the world to come. Believest thou in Christ? Then thou hast salvation. "But he that believeth not shall be damned." Pronounce the word hard or soft as thou wilt, it will come to the same thing in the end—thou shalt be condemned, and condemned hopelessly, if thou believest not in Jesus Christ, the one sole propitiation for the sins of men. This we hold fast. I know you are established in these truths, my beloved, and you mean to hold them as long as you breathe, and not to deny the faith which the Lord himself has delivered to you.

Once more, we hold fast this name *in its immutability*. We are told to-day that this is an age of progress, and therefore we must accept an improved gospel. Every man is to be his own lawyer, and every man his own saviour. We are getting on in the direction of every man putting away his own sin, just as every chimney should consume its own smoke. But, dear friends, we do not believe these idle dreams. We want no new gospel, no modern salvation. Our conviction is that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The way that Paul went to heaven is good enough for me.

> "The way the holy prophets went,
> The road that leads from banishment,"

is broad enough and safe enough for me. When I remember my dear brethren and sisters in Christ who have fallen asleep, whom I saw die with triumph lighting up their faces, I feel quite content with the salvation which saved them, and I am not going to try experiments or speculations. To talk of improving upon our perfect Saviour is to insult him. He is God's propitiation; what would you more? My blood boils with indignation at the idea of improving the gospel. There is but one Saviour, and that one Saviour is the same for ever. His doctrine is the same in every age, and is not yea and nay. What a strange result we should obtain in the general assembly of heaven if some were saved by the gospel of the first century, and others by the gospel of the second, and others by the gospel of the seventeenth, and others by the gospel of the nineteenth century! We should need a different song of praise for the clients of these various periods, and the mingled chorus would be rather to the glory of man's culture than to

the praise of the one Lord. No such mottled heaven, and no such discordant song, shall ever be produced. There is one church and one Saviour. We believe in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. To eternal glory there is but one way; to walk therein we must hold fast one truth, and be quickened by one life. We stand fast by the unaltered, unalterable, eternal name of Jesus Christ our Lord. This is what we mean by holding fast the name and the faith of Jesus.

III. Thirdly, dear friends, to lead you a step further in the same road, LET ME SHOW THE PRACTICAL PLACE OF THE NAME AND OF THE FAITH WITH US.

The practical place of it is this: first of all, *it is our personal comfort*—

> "Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
> That bids our sorrows cease;
> 'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
> 'Tis life, and health, and peace."

The faith which we hold is our daily and hourly joy and hope. The doctrines which I believe in connection with the divine Person in whom I trust are the pillow of my weariness, the anodyne of my care, the rest of my spirit. Jesus gives me a look-out for years to come which is celestial, and at the same time I can look back with thankfulness on the years which are past. For all time the Lord Jesus is our heart's content. Nothing can separate us from his love, and therefore nothing can deprive us of our confident hope. Through this blessed name and this blessed faith believers are themselves made glad and strong. On the name of Jesus we feed, and in that name we wrap ourselves. It is strength for our weakness, yea, life for our death.

And then, dear friends, this name, this faith, these are *our message*. Our only business here below is to cry, "Behold the Lamb." Are any of you sent of God with any other message? It cannot be. The one message which God has given to his people to proclaim is salvation through the Lamb—salvation by the blood of Jesus. It is by his blood that cleansing comes to the polluted. He is the one great Propitiation. To tell of Jesus is our occupation, we have nothing to say which is not comprised in the revelation made to us by God in Christ Jesus. He who is our one comfort is also our one theme.

He also is *our divine authority* for holy work. We preach the gospel in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. If we preached it in any other name men would have a right to reject it. If the spiritually sick are healed, it is his name which makes them strong. If devils flee before us, we cast them out in his name. Oh, that we did more often remember that all our teaching and preaching must be done in the name of Jesus! In his name we gather for worship, in his name we go forth to service. If we go in our own name we go in vain; but if we are ambassadors for God, as though he did beseech men by us, then we pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, and we are hopeful that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

This also is *our power* in preaching; indeed, it is our power, our only power in living before God. Brethren, the devil will never be cast out by any other name—let us hold it fast. If we conjure by eloquence,

talent, music, or what not, the evil one will say, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" It is only his name that makes the legions of hell quit the bosoms of the possessed, and fly howling down into the deep. This is the name high over all; but there is none other which hath such power in it. Spiritual diseases, yea, death itself, will yield to this name. It is his name that makes Lazarus come forth from the grave, and the young man sit upright on the bier. Use this name, and nothing can stand before you.

I said that it is our power in life, and so, indeed, it is. When we draw near to God, what is our strength wherewith to prevail *in prayer?* Is it not that we ask in the name of Jesus? If you leave out the name of Jesus, what are your prayers but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal? Prayer without the name of Jesus has no wings with which to fly up to God. This is that golden ladder whereby we climb up to the throne of God, and take unspeakably precious things out of the hand of the Eternal. That name prevaileth with God concerning everything, and so enables us to prevail with man; wherefore, hold it fast, and deny not the faith; for what can you do if the truth and the name of Jesus be given up?

This name is our one *hope of victory*. As Constantine, in his dream, saw the cross, and took it for his emblem, with the motto, "By this sign I conquer," so to-day our only hope of victory for the gospel is that the cross of Christ displays it, and the name of Jesus is in it. His name is named on us, and in his name we will cast out devils, and do many mighty works, till his name shall be known and honoured wherever the sun pursues his course, or the moon cheers the watches of the night.

III. Now, in closing, I will URGE REASONS FOR HOLDING FAST THE NAME AND FAITH OF JESUS. I hope we hold it so fast that we can never give it up while reason holds its throne. There is an old Christian legend concerning Ignatius, that he never spoke without mentioning the name of Jesus whom he loved. His speech seemed saturated with love to his Lord, and when he died the name of Jesus was found to be stamped on his heart. It may not have been so literally, but no doubt it was true spiritually. The name of Jesus is, I hope, written in our hearts so as to be inseparable from our lives. Whatever else may go, the name of Jesus can never depart from our thoughts. Dying men have been known to forget everything but this. The man has forgotten his wife, his children, his bosom friend, and has turned away oblivious from them all, as if they were strangers; and yet when the name of Jesus has been whispered in his ear, his eyes have brightened, and his countenance has responded to that precious name. O memory, leave no other name than his recorded upon thy tablets! Happy forgetfulness which clears all else away, but leaves that name in solitary glory!

That it may be so I will put the question thus: *Why should we give up the faith?* I fail to see a reason. Why should I change my belief, or cease to hold fast the name of Christ Jesus my Lord? It is an irrational suggestion. "I am open to conviction," said a man who knew his ground, "I am open to conviction, but I should like to see the man that could convince me." I am in very much the same condition with

regard to the gospel of my Lord Jesus: I am open to conviction, but I shall never see the man that can convince me out of my experience, my conviction, my consciousness, my hope, my all. Before I could quit my faith in the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and my confidence in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, I should have to be ground to powder, and every separate atom transformed.

What would they give us in exchange for the faith? That is a question which it is easy to ask, but impossible to answer. Suppose the doctrines of grace could be obliterated, and our hope could be taken away, what would they give us in the place of them, either for this life or the next? I have never seen anything proposed in the place of the gospel that was worth considering for a second. Have you? Uncertainty, doubt, glitter, mockery, darkness—all these; but who wants them? They offer us either bubbles or filth, according to the different shade of the speculator's character; but we are not enamoured of either. We prefer gold to dross.

We must defend the faith; for *what would have become of us if our fathers had not maintained it?* If confessors, reformers, martyrs, and covenanters had been recreant to the name and faith of Jesus, where would have been the churches of to-day? Must we not play the man as they did? If we do not, are we not censuring our fathers? It is very pretty, is it not, to read of Luther and his brave deeds? Of course, everybody admires Luther! Yes, yes; but you do not want any one else to do the same to-day. When you go to the Zoological Gardens you all admire the bear; but how would you like a bear at home, or a bear wandering loose about the street? You tell me that it would be unbearable, and no doubt you are right. So, we admire a man who was firm in the faith, say four hundred years ago; the past ages are a sort of bear-pit or iron cage for him; but such a man to-day is a nuisance, and must be put down. Call him a narrow-minded bigot, or give him a worse name if you can think of one. Yet imagine that in those ages past, Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, and their compeers had said, "The world is out of order; but if we try to set it right we shall only make a great row, and get ourselves into disgrace. Let us go to our chambers, put on our night-caps, and sleep over the bad times, and perhaps when we wake up things will have grown better." Such conduct on their part would have entailed upon us a heritage of error. Age after age would have gone down into the infernal deeps, and the pestiferous bogs of error would have swallowed all. These men loved the faith and the name of Jesus too well to see them trampled on. Note what we owe them, and let us pay to our sons the debt we owe our fathers. It is to-day as it was in the Reformers' days. Decision is needed. Here is the day for the man, where is the man for the day? We who have had the gospel passed to us by martyr hands dare not trifle with it, nor sit by and hear it denied by traitors, who pretend to love it, but inwardly abhor every line of it. The faith I hold bears upon it marks of the blood of my ancestors. Shall I deny their faith, for which they left their native land to sojourn here? Shall we cast away the treasure which was handed to us through the bars of prisons, or came to us charred with the flames of Smithfield?

Personally, when my bones have been tortured with rheumatism, I have remembered Job Spurgeon, doubtless of my own stock, who in Chelmsford Jail was allowed a chair, because he could not lie down by reason of rheumatic pain. That Quaker's broad-brim overshadows my brow. Perhaps I inherit his rheumatism; but that I do not regret if I have his stubborn faith, which will not let me yield a syllable of the truth of God. When I think of how others have suffered for the faith, a little scorn or unkindness seems a mere trifle, not worthy of mention. An ancestry of lovers of the faith ought to be a great plea with us to abide by the Lord God of our fathers, and the faith in which they lived. As for me, I must hold the old gospel: I can do no other. God helping me, I will endure the consequences of what men think obstinacy.

Look you, sirs, *there are ages yet to come.* If the Lord does not speedily appear, there will come another generation, and another, and all these generations will be tainted and injured if we are not faithful to God and to his truth to-day. We have come to a turning-point in the road. If we turn to the right, mayhap our children and our children's children will go that way; but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and to his Word. I charge you, not only by your ancestry, but by your posterity, that you seek to win the commendation of your Master, that though you dwell where Satan's seat is, you yet hold fast his name, and do not deny his faith. God grant us faithfulness, for the sake of the souls around us! How is the world to be saved if the church is false to her Lord? How are we to lift the masses if our fulcrum is removed? If our gospel is uncertain, what remains but increasing misery and despair? Stand fast, my beloved, in the name of God! I, your brother in Christ, entreat you to abide in the truth. Quit yourselves like men, be strong. The Lord sustain you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Rev. ii. 1—17.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—422, 390, 409.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LORD AND THE LEPER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 12TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed."—Mark i. 40, 41, 42.

BELOVED, we saw in the reading, that our Lord had been engaged in special prayer. He had gone alone on the mountain-side to have communion with God. Simon and the rest search for him, and he comes away in the early morning with the burrs from the hill-side upon his garments, the smell of the field upon him, even of a field that the Lord God had blessed; he comes forth among the people, charged with power which he had received in communion with the Father; and now we may expect to see wonders. And we do see them; for devils fear and fly when he speaks the word; and by-and-by, there comes to him one, an extraordinary being, condemned to live apart from the rest of men, lest he should spread defilement all around. A leper comes to him, and kneels before him, and expresses his confident faith in him, that he can make him whole. Now is the Son of Man glorious in his power to save.

The Lord Jesus Christ at this day has all power in heaven and in earth. He is charged with a divine energy to bless all who come to him for healing. Oh, that we may see to-day some great wonder of his power and grace! Oh, for one of the days of the Son of Man here and now! To that end it is absolutely needful that we should find a case for his spiritual power to work upon. Is there not one here in whom his grace may prove its omnipotence? Not you, ye good, ye self-righteous! You yield him no space to work in. You that are whole have no need of a physician: in you there is no opportunity for him to display his miraculous force. But yonder are the men we seek for. Forlorn, and lost, full of evil, and self-condemned, you are the characters we seek. You that feel as if you were possessed with evil spirits, and you that are leprous with sin, you are the persons in whom Jesus will find ample room and verge enough for the display of his holy skill. Of you I might say, as he once said of the man born blind: you are here that the works of God may be

manifest in you. You, with your guilt and your depravity, you furnish the empty vessels into which his grace may be poured, the sick souls upon whom he may display his matchless power to bless and save. Be hopeful, then, ye sinful ones! Look up this morning for the Lord's approach, and expect that even in you he will work great marvels. This leper shall be a picture—yea, I hope a mirror—in whom you will see yourselves. I do pray that as I go over the details of this miracle many here may put themselves in the leper's place, and do just as the leper did, and receive, just as the leper received, cleansing from the hand of Christ. O Spirit of the living God, the thousands of our Israel now entreat thee to work, that Jesus, the Son of God, may be glorified here and now!

I. I will begin my rehearsal of the gospel narrative by remarking, first, that THIS LEPER'S FAITH MADE HIM EAGER TO BE HEALED. He was a leper; I will not stay just now to describe what horrors are compacted into that single word; but he believed that Jesus could cleanse him, and his belief stirred him to an anxious desire to be healed at once.

Alas! we have to deal with spiritual lepers eaten up with the foul disease of sin; but *some of them do not believe that they ever can be healed*, and the consequence is that despair makes them sin most greedily. "I may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb," is the inward impression of many a sinner when he fears that there is no mercy and no help for him. Because there is no hope, therefore they plunge deeper and yet deeper into the slough of iniquity. Oh, that you might be delivered from that false idea! Mercy still rules the hour. There is hope while Jesus sends his gospel to you, and bids you repent. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins": this is a sweet sentence of a true creed. I believe also in the renewal of men's hearts; for the Lord can give new hearts and right spirits to the evil and unthankful. I would that you believed it; for if you did, I trust it would quicken you into seeking that your sins might be forgiven and your minds might be renewed. Do you believe it? Then come to Jesus and receive the blessings of free grace.

We have a number of lepers who come in among us whose disease is white upon their brows, and visible to all beholders, and yet *they are indifferent:* they do not mourn their wickedness, nor wish to be cleansed from it. They sit among God's people, and they listen to the doctrine of a new birth, and the news of pardon, and they hear the teaching as though it had nothing to do with them. If now and then they half wish that salvation would come to them, it is too languid a wish to last. They have not yet so perceived their disease and their danger as to pray to be delivered from them. They sleep on upon the bed of sloth, and care neither for heaven nor hell. Indifference to spiritual things is the sin of the age. Men are stolid of heart about eternal realities. An awful apathy is upon the multitude. The leper in our text was not so foolish as this. He eagerly desired to be delivered from his dreadful malady: with heart and soul he pined to be cleansed from its terrible defilement. Oh that it were so with you! May the Lord make you feel how depraved your heart is, and how diseased with sin are all the faculties of your soul! Alas, dear friends,

there are some that even love their leprosy! Is it not a sad thing to have to speak thus? Surely, madness is in men's hearts. Men do not wish to be saved from doing evil. They love the ways and wages of iniquity. They would like to go to heaven, but they must have their drunken frolics on the road; they would very well like to be saved from hell, but not from the sin which is the cause of it. Their notion of salvation is not to be saved from the love of evil, and to be made pure and clean; but that is God's meaning when he speaks of salvation. How can they hope to be the slaves of sin, and yet at the same time be free? Our first necessity is to be saved from sinning. The very name of Jesus tells us *that:* he is called Jesus because "he shall save his people from their sins." These persons do not care for a salvation which would mean self-denial and the giving up of ungodly lusts. O wretched lepers, that count their leprosy to be a beauty, and take pleasure in sin which in the sight of God is far more loathsome than the worst disease of the body! Oh, that Christ Jesus would come and change their views of things until they were of the same mind as God towards sin; and you know he calls it "that abominable thing which I hate." Oh, if men could see their love to wrong things to be a disease more sickening than leprosy, they would fain be saved, and saved at once! Holy Spirit, convince of sin, that sinners may be eager to be cleansed!

Lepers were obliged to consort together: lepers associated with lepers, and they must have made up a dreadful confraternity. How glad they would have been to escape from it! But I know spiritual lepers who *love the company of their fellow lepers.* Yes, and the more leprous a man becomes, the more do they admire him. A bold sinner is often the idol of his comrades. Though foul in his life, others cling to him for that very reason. Such persons like to learn some new bit of wickedness, they are eager to be initiated into a yet darker form of impure pleasure. Oh, how they long to hear that last lascivious song, to read that last impure novel! It seems to be the desire of many to know as much evil as they can. They flock together, and take a dreadful pleasure in talk and action which is the horror of all pure minds. Strange lepers, that heap up leprosy as a treasure! Even those who do not go into gross open sin, yet are pleased with infidel notions and sceptical opinions, which are a wretched form of mental leprosy. O horrible malady, which makes men doubt the word of the living God!

Lepers were not allowed to associate with healthy persons except under severe restrictions. Thus were they separated from their nearest and dearest friends. What a sorrow! Alas! I know persons thus separated, who *do not wish to associate with the godly;* to them holy company is dull and wearisome; they do not feel free and easy in such society, and therefore they avoid it as much as decency allows. How can they hope to live with saints for ever, when they shun them now as dull and moping acquaintances?

O my hearers, I have come hither this morning in the hope that God would bless the word to some poor sinner who feels he is a sinner, and would fain be cleansed: such is the leper I am seeking with my whole heart. I pray God to bless the word to those who wish to escape from evil company, who would no longer sit in the assembly of the

mockers, nor run in the paths of the unholy. To those who have grown weary of their sinful companions, and would escape from them, lest they should be bound up in bundles with them to burn at the last great day—to such I speak at this time with a loving desire for their salvation. I hope my word will come with divine application to some poor heart here that is crying, "I wish I might be numbered with the people of God. I wish I were fit to be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord. Oh, that my dreadful sinfulness were conquered, so that I could have fellowship with the godly, and be myself one of them!" I hope my Lord has brought to this place just such lost ones, that he may find them. I am looking out for them with tearful eyes. But my feeble eyes cannot read inward character; and it is well that the loving Saviour, who discerns the secrets of all hearts, and reads all inward desires, is looking from the watch-towers of heaven, that he may discover those who are coming to him, even though as yet they are a great way off. Oh that sinners may now beg and pray to be rescued from their sins! May those who have become habituated to evil long to break off their evil habits! Happy will the preacher be if he finds himself surrounded with penitents who hate their sins, and guilty ones who cry to be forgiven, and to be so changed that they shall go and sin no more.

II. In the second place, let us remark that THIS LEPER'S FAITH WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM BELIEVE THAT HE COULD BE HEALED OF HIS HIDEOUS DISEASE. *Leprosy was an unutterably loathsome disease.* As it exists even now, it is described by those who have seen it in such a way that I will not harrow your feelings by repeating all the sickening details. The following quotation may be more than sufficient. Dr. Thomson in his famous work, "The Land and the Book," speaks of lepers in the East, and says, "The hair falls from the head and eye-brows; the nails loosen, decay and drop off; joint after joint of the fingers and toes shrink up and slowly fall away. The gums are absorbed, and the teeth disappear. The nose, the eyes, the tongue and the palate are slowly consumed." This disease turns a man into a mass of loathsomeness, a walking pile of pests. Leprosy is nothing better than a horrible and lingering death. The leper in the narrative before us had sad personal experience of this, and yet he believed that Jesus could cleanse him. Splendid faith! Oh that you who are afflicted with moral and spiritual leprosy could believe in this fashion! Jesus Christ of Nazareth can heal even you. Over the horror of leprosy faith triumphed. Oh that in your case it would overcome the terribleness of sin!

Leprosy was known to be incurable. There was no case of a man being cured of real leprosy by any medical or surgical treatment. This made the cure of Naaman in former ages so noteworthy. Observe, moreover, that our Saviour himself, so far as I can see, had never healed a leper up to the moment when this poor wretch appeared upon the scene. He had cured fever, and had cast out devils, but the cure of leprosy was in the Saviour's life as yet an unexampled thing. Yet this man, putting this and that together, and understanding something of the nature and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, believed that he could cure him of his incurable disease.

He felt that even if the great Lord had not yet healed leprosy, he was assuredly capable of doing so great a deed, and he determined to apply to him. Was not this grand faith? Oh that such faith could be found among my hearers at this hour! Hear me, O trembling sinner: if thou be as full of sin this morning as an egg is full of meat, Jesus can remove it all. If thy propensities to sin be as untamable as the wild boar of the wood, yet Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, can subdue thine iniquities, and make thee the obedient servant of his love. Jesus can turn the lion into a lamb, and he can do it now. He can transform thee where thou art sitting, saving thee in yonder pew while I am speaking the word. All things are possible to the Saviour God; and all things are possible to him that believeth. I would thou hadst such a faith as this leper had, although if it were even less it might serve thy turn, since thou hast not all his difficulties to contend with, since Jesus has already saved many sinners like thyself, and changed many hearts as hard as thine. If he shall regenerate thee, he will be doing for thee no strange thing, but only one of the daily miracles of his grace. He has now healed thousands of thy fellow lepers: canst thou not believe that he can heal the leprosy in thee?

This man had a marvellous faith, thus to believe while *he was personally the victim of that mortal malady.* It is one thing to trust a doctor when you are well, but quite another to confide in him when your body is rotting away. For a real, conscious sinner to trust the Saviour is no mean thing. When you hope that there is some good thing in you, it is easy to be confident; but to be conscious of total ruin and yet to believe in the divine remedy—this is real faith. To see in the sunshine is mere natural vision; but to see in the dark needs the eye of faith: to believe that Jesus has saved you when you see the signs of it, is the result of reason; but to trust him to cleanse you while you are still defiled with sin—this is the essence of saving faith.

The leprosy was firmly seated and fully developed in this man. Luke says that he was "full of leprosy": he had as much of the poison in him as one poor body could contain, it had come to its worst stage in him; and yet he believed that Jesus of Nazareth could make him clean. Glorious confidence! O my hearer, if thou art full of sin, if thy propensities and habits have become as bad as bad can be, I pray the Holy Spirit to give thee faith enough to believe that the Son of God can forgive thee and renew thee, and do it at once. With one word of his mouth Jesus can turn your death into life, your corruption into comeliness. Changes which we cannot work in others, much less in ourselves, Jesus, by his invincible Spirit, can work in the hearts of the ungodly. Of these stones he can raise up children unto Abraham. His moral and spiritual miracles are often wrought upon cases which seem beyond all hope, cases which pity itself endeavours to forget because her efforts have been so long in vain.

I like best about this man's faith the fact that he did not merely believe that Jesus Christ could cleanse a leper, but that he could cleanse *him!* He said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make *me* clean." It is very easy to believe for other people. There is really no faith in such impersonal, proxy confidence. The true faith believes for itself first, and then for others. Oh, I know some of you are saying, "I

believe that Jesus can save my brother. I believe that he can save the vilest of the vile. If I heard that he had saved the biggest drunkard in Southwark I should not wonder." Canst thou believe all this, and yet fear that he cannot save thee? This is strange inconsistency. If he heals another man's leprosy, can he not heal *thy* leprosy? If one drunkard is saved, why not another? If in one man a passionate temper is subdued, why not in another? If lust, and covetousness, and lying, and pride have been cured in many men, why not in thee? Even if thou art a blasphemer, blasphemy has been cured; why should it not be so in thy case? He can heal thee of that particular form of sin which possesses thee, however high a degree its power may have reached; for nothing is too hard for the Lord. Jesus can change and cleanse thee now. In a moment he can impart a new life and commence a new character. Canst thou believe this? This is the faith which glorified Jesus, and brought healing to this leper; and it is the faith which will save you at once if you now exercise it. O Spirit of the living God, work this faith in the minds of my dear hearers, that they may thus win their suit with the Lord Jesus, and go their way healed of the plague of sin!

III. Now, notice, thirdly, that this man's faith WAS FIXED ON JESUS CHRIST ALONE. Let me read the man's words again. He said unto Jesus, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Throw the emphasis upon the *pronouns*. See him kneeling before the Lord Jesus, and hear him say, "If *thou* wilt, *thou* canst make *me* clean." He has no idea of looking to the disciples; no, not to one of them or to all of them. He had no notion of trusting in a measure to the medicine which physicians would prescribe for him. All that is gone. No dream of other hope remains; but with his eye fully fixed on the blessed Miracle-worker of Nazareth, he cries, "If *thou* wilt, *thou* canst make me clean." In himself he had no shade of confidence; every delusion of that kind had been banished by a fierce experience of his disease. He knew that none on earth could deliver him, and that by no innate power of constitution could he throw out the poison; but he confidently believed that the Son of God could by himself effect the cure. This was God-given faith—the faith of God's elect, and Jesus was its sole object.

How came this man to have such faith? I cannot tell you the outward means, but I think we may guess without presumption. Had he not *heard our Lord preach?* Matthew puts this story immediately after the Sermon on the Mount, and says, "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Had this man managed to stand at the edge of the crowd and hear Jesus speak, and did those wondrous words convince him that the great Teacher was something more than man? As he noted the style, and manner, and matter of that marvellous sermon, did he say within himself, "Never man spake like this man. Truly he is the Son of God. I believe in him. I trust him. He can cleanse me"? May God bless the preaching of Christ crucified to you who hear me this day! Is not this used of the Lord, and made to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth?

Perhaps this man had *seen our Lord's miracles.* I feel sure he had. He had seen the devils cast out, and had heard of Peter's wife's mother, who had lain sick of a fever, and had been instantaneously recovered. The leper might very properly argue—To do this requires omnipotence; and once granted that omnipotence is at work, then omnipotence can as well deal with leprosy as with fever. Did he not reason well if he argued thus—What the Lord has done, he can do again: if in one case he has displayed almighty power, he can display that same power in another case? Thus would the acts of the Lord corroborate his words, and furnish a sure foundation for the leper's hope. My hearer, have you not seen Jesus save others? Have you not at least read of his miracles of grace? Believe him, then, for his works' sake, and say to him, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Besides, I think this man may have *heard something of the story of Christ,* and may have been familiar with the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. We cannot tell but some disciple may have informed him of John's witness concerning the Christ, and of the signs and tokens which supported John's testimony. He may thus have discerned in the Son of Man the Messiah of God, the Incarnate Deity. At any rate, as knowledge must come before faith, he had received knowledge enough to feel that he could trust this glorious personage, and to believe that, if he willed it, Jesus could make him clean. O my dear hearers, cannot you trust the Lord Jesus Christ in this way? Do you not believe—I hope you do—that he is the Son of God; and if so, why not trust him? He that was born of Mary at Bethlehem was God over all, blessed for ever! Do you not believe this? Why, then, do you not rely upon God in our nature? You believe in his consecrated life, his suffering death, his resurrection, his ascension, his sitting in power at the right hand of the Father; why do you not trust him? God hath highly exalted him, and caused all fulness to dwell in him: he is able to save unto the uttermost, why do you not come to him? Believe that he is able, and then with all thy sins before thee, red like scarlet—and with all thy sinful habits, and thy evil propensities before thee, ingrained like the leopard's spots—believe that the Saviour of men can at once make thee whiter than snow as to past guilt, and free from the present and future tyranny of evil. A divine Saviour must be able to cleanse thee from all sin. Only Jesus can do it, but he can do it—do it himself alone, do it now, do it in thee, do it with a word. If Jesus wills to do it, it is all that is wanted; for his will is the will of the Almighty Lord. Say, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Faith must be fixed alone on Jesus. None other name is given among men whereby we must be saved. I do pray the Lord to give that faith to all my dear friends present this morning who as yet have not received cleansing at the Lord's hands. Jesus is God's ultimatum of salvation: the unique hope of guilty men both as to pardon and renewal. Accept him even now.

IV. Now let me go a step further: THIS MAN'S FAITH HAD RESPECT TO A REAL MATTER-OF-FACT CURE. He did not think of the Lord Jesus Christ as a priest who would perform certain ceremonies over him.

and formally say, "Thou art clean"; for that would not have been true. He wanted really to be delivered from the leprosy; to have those dry scales, into which his skin kept turning, taken all away, that his flesh might become as the flesh of a little child; he wanted that the rottenness, which was eating up his body, should be stayed, and that health should be actually restored. Friends, it is easy enough to believe in a mere priestly absolution if you have enough credulity; but we need more than this. It is very easy to believe in Baptismal Regeneration, but what is the good of it? What practical result does it produce? A child remains the same after it has been baptismally regenerated as it was before, and it grows up to prove it. It is easy to believe in Sacramentarianism if you are foolish enough; but there is nothing in it when you believe in it. No sanctifying power comes with outward ceremonials in and of themselves. To believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can make us love the good things which once we despised, and shun those evil things in which we once took pleasure—this is to believe in him indeed and of a truth. Jesus can totally change the nature, and make a sinner into a saint. This is faith of a practical kind; this is a faith worth having.

None of us would imagine that this leper meant that the Lord Jesus could make him feel comfortable in remaining a leper. Some seem to fancy that Jesus came to let us go on in our sins with a quiet conscience; but he did nothing of the kind. His salvation is cleansing from sin, and if we love sin we are not saved from it. We cannot have justification without sanctification. There is no use in quibbling about it; there must be a change, a radical change, a change of heart, or else we are not saved. I put it now to you, Do you desire a moral and a spiritual change, a change of life, thought and motive? This is what Jesus gives. Just as this leper needed a thorough physical change, so do you need an entire renewal of your spiritual nature, so as to become a new creature in Jesus Christ. Oh that many here would desire this, for it would be a cheering sign. The man who desires to be pure is beginning to be pure; the man who sincerely longs to conquer sin has struck the first blow already. The power of sin is shaken in that man who looks to Jesus for deliverance from it. The man who frets under the yoke of sin will not long be a slave to it; if he can believe that Jesus Christ is able to set him free, he shall soon quit his bondage. Some sins which have hardened down into habits, yet disappear in a moment when Jesus Christ looks upon a man in love. I have known many instances of persons who, for many years, had never spoken without an oath, or a filthy expression, who, being converted, have never been known to use such language again, and have scarcely ever been tempted in that direction. This is one of the sins which seem to die at the first shot, and it is a very wonderful thing it should be so. Others I have known so altered at once that the very propensity which was strongest in them has been the last to annoy them afterwards: they have had such a reversion of the mind's action that, while other sins have worried them for years, and they have had to set a strict watch against them, yet their favourite and dominant sin has never again had the slightest influence over them, except to excite an outburst of horror and deep repentance. Oh, that

you had faith in Jesus that he could thus cast down and cast out your reigning sins! Believe in the conquering arm of the Lord Jesus, and he will do it. Conversion is the standing miracle of the church. Where it is genuine, it is as clear a proof of divine power going with the gospel, as was the casting out of devils, or even the raising of the dead in our Lord's day. We see these conversions still; and have proof that Jesus is able to work great moral marvels still. O my hearer, where art thou? Canst thou not believe that Jesus is able to make a new man of thee? O brethren, who have been saved, I entreat you to breathe a prayer at this time for those who are not yet cleansed from the foul disease of sin. Pray that they may have grace to believe in the Lord Jesus for purification of heart, pardon of sin, and the implantation of eternal life. Then when faith is given, the Lord Jesus will work their sanctification, and none shall effectually hinder. In silence let us pray for a moment. (Here there was a pause, and silent prayer went up to heaven.)

V. And now we will go another step: THIS MAN'S FAITH WAS ATTENDED WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE A HESITANCY. But after thinking it over a good deal, I am hardly inclined to think it such a hesitancy as many have judged it to be. He said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." There was an "if" in this speech, and that "if" has aroused the suspicions of many preachers. Some think it supposes that he doubted our Lord's willingness. I hardly think that the language justly bears so harsh a construction. What he meant may have been this—"Lord, I do not know yet that thou art sent to heal lepers; I have not seen that thou hast ever done so; but, still, if it be within the compass of thy commission, I believe thou wilt do it, and assuredly thou canst if thou wilt. Thou canst heal not only some lepers, but me in particular; thou canst make me clean." Now, I think this was a legitimate thing for him to say, as he had not seen a leper healed—"If it be within the compass of thy commission, I believe thou canst make me whole."

Moreover, I admire in this text *the deference which the leper pays to the sovereignty of Christ's will as to the bestowal of his gifts.* "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean";—as much as to say, "I know thou hast a right to distribute these great favours exactly as thou pleasest. I have no claim upon thee; I cannot say that thou art bound to make me clean; I appeal to thy pity and free favour. The matter remains with thy will." The man had never read the text which saith, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," for it was not yet written; but he had in his mind the humble spirit suggested by that grand truth. He owned that grace must come as a free gift of God's good pleasure when he said, "Lord, if thou wilt." Beloved, we need never raise a question as to the Lord's will to give grace when we have the will to receive it; but still, I would have every sinner feel that he has no claim upon God for anything. O sinner, if the Lord should give thee up, as he did the heathen described in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, thou deservest it. If he should never look upon thee with an eye of love, what couldst thou say against his righteous sentence? Thou hast wilfully sinned, and thou deservest to be left in thy sin. Confessing all this, we still cling to our firm belief in the power of grace,

and cry, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst." We appeal to our Saviour's pitying love, relying upon his boundless power.

See, also, how the leper, to my mind, *really speaks without any hesitancy*, if you understand him. He does not say, "Lord, if thou puttest out thy hand, thou canst make me clean"; nor, "Lord, if thou speakest, thou canst make me clean"; but only, "Lord, *if thou wilt*, thou canst make me clean": thy mere will can do it. Oh, splendid faith! If you are inclined to spy a little halting in it, I would have you admire it for running so well with a lame foot. If there was a weakness anywhere in his faith, still it was so strong that the weakness only manifests its strength. Sinner, it is so; and I pray God that thy heart may grasp it—if the Lord wills it he can make thee clean. Believest thou this? If so, carry out practically what thy faith will suggest to thee—namely, that thou come to Jesus and plead with him, and get from him the cleansing which thou needest. To that end I am hoping to lead thee, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

VI. In the sixth place, notice that THIS MAN'S FAITH HAD EARNEST ACTION FLOWING OUT OF IT. Believing that, if Jesus willed, he could make him clean, what did the leper do? At once he came to Jesus. I know not from what distance, but he came as near to Jesus as he could. Then we read that he besought him; that is to say, he pleaded, and pleaded, and pleaded again. He cried, "Lord, cleanse me! Lord, heal my leprosy!" Nor was this all; he fell on his knees and worshipped; for we read, "Kneeling down to him." He not only knelt, but knelt to Jesus. He had no difficulty as to paying him divine honour. He worshipped the Lord Christ, paying him reverent homage. He then went on to honour him by an open acknowledgment of his power, his marvellous power, his infinite power, by saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." I should not wonder if some that stood by began to smile at what they thought the poor man's fanatical credulity. They murmured, "What a poor fool this leper is, to think that Jesus of Nazareth can cure him of his leprosy!" Such a confession of faith had seldom been heard. But whatever critics and sceptics might think, this brave man boldly declared, "Lord, this is my confession of faith: I believe that if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Now, poor soul, thou that art full of guilt, and hardened in sin, and yet anxious to be healed, look straight away to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is here now. In the preaching of the gospel he is with us alway. With the eyes of thy mind behold him, for he beholdeth thee. Thou knowest that he lives, even though thou seest him not. Believe in this living Jesus; believe for perfect cleansing. Cry to him, worship him, adore him, trust him. He is very God of very God; bow before him, and cast thyself upon his mercy. Go home, and on thy knees say, "Lord, I believe that thou canst make me clean." He will hear your cry, and will save you. There will be no interval between your prayer and the gracious reward of faith, of which I am now to speak.

VII. Lastly, HIS FAITH HAD ITS REWARD. Have patience with me just a minute. The reward of this man's faith was, first, that *his very words were treasured up*. Matthew, Mark, Luke, all three of them record the precise words which this man used: "Lord, if thou wilt,

thou canst make me clean." They evidently did not see so much to find fault with in them as some have done; on the contrary, they thought them gems to be placed in the setting of their gospels. Three times over are they recorded, because they are such a splendid confession of faith for a poor diseased leper to have made. I believe that God is as much glorified by that one sentence of the leper as by the song of Cherubim and Seraphim, when they continually do cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." A sinner's lips declaring his confident faith in God's own Son can breathe sonnets unto God more sweet than those of the angelic choirs. This man's first faith-words are folded up in the fair linen of three evangels, and laid up in the treasury of the house of the Lord. God values the language of humble confidence.

His next reward was, that *Jesus echoed his words.* He said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"; and Jesus said, "I will; be thou clean." As an echo answers to the voice, so did Jesus to his supplicant. The Lord Jesus was so pleased with this man's words that he caught them as they leaped out of his mouth, and used them himself, saying, "I will; be thou clean." If you can only get, then, as far as this leper's confession, I believe that our Lord Jesus from his throne above will answer to your prayer.

So potent were the words of this leper that *they moved our Lord very wonderfully.* Read the forty-first verse: "And Jesus, moved with compassion." The Greek word here used, if I were to pronounce it in your hearing, would half suggest its own meaning. It expresses a stirring of the entire manhood, a commotion in all the inward parts. The heart and all the vitals of the man are in active movement. The Saviour was greatly moved. You have seen a man moved, have you not? When a strong man is unable any longer to restrain himself, and is forced to give way to his feelings, you have seen him tremble all over, and at last burst out into an evident break-down. It was just so with the Saviour: his pity moved him, his delight in the leper's faith mastered him. When he heard the man speak with such confidence in him, the Saviour was moved with a sacred passion, which, as it was in sympathy with the leper, is called "compassion." Oh, to think that a poor leper should have such power over the divine Son of God! Yet, my hearer, in all thy sin and misery, if thou canst believe in Jesus, thou canst move the heart of thy blessed Saviour. Yea, even now his bowels yearn towards thee.

No sooner was our Lord Jesus thus moved than *out went his hand,* and he touched the man and healed him immediately. It did not require a long time for the working of the cure; but the leper's blood was cooled and cleansed in a single second. Our Lord could work this miracle, and make all things new in the man; for "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." He restored the poor, decaying, putrefying body of this man, and he was cleansed at once. To make him quite sure that he was cleansed, the Lord Jesus bade him go to the priest, and seek a certificate of health. He was so clean that he might be examined by the appointed sanitary authority, and come off without suspicion. The cure which he had received was a real and radical one, and therefore he might go

away at once, and get the certificate of it. If our converts will not bear practical tests, they are worth nothing; let even our enemies judge whether they are not better men and women when Jesus has renewed them. If Jesus saves a sinner, he does not mind all men testing the change. Jesus does not seek display, but he seeks examination from those able to judge. Our converts will bear the test. Come hither, angels! Come hither, pure intelligences, able to observe men in secret! Here is a wretch of a sinner who came hither this morning. He seemed first cousin to the devil; but the Lord Jesus Christ has converted him and changed him. Now look at him, ye angels; look at him at home in his chamber! Watch him in private life. We can read your verdict. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"; and this proves what you think. It is such a wonderful change, and angels are so sure of it, that they give their certificates at once. How do they give their certificates? Why, each one manifests his joy as he sees the sinner turning from his sinful ways. Oh, that the angels might have work of this kind to do this morning! Dear hearer, may you be one over whom they rejoice! If thou believest on Jesus Christ, and if thou wilt trust him, as the sent One of God, fully and entirely with thy soul, he will make thee clean. Behold him on the cross, and see sin put away. Behold him risen from the dead, and see new life bestowed. Behold him enthroned in power, and see evil conquered. I am ready to be bound for my Lord, to be his surety, that if thou, my hearer, wilt come to him, he will make thee clean. Believe thy Saviour, and thy cure is wrought. God help thee, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark i. 16—45.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—428, 602, 546.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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JOB AMONG THE ASHES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."—Job xlii. 5, 6.

JEHOVAH had spoken, Job had trembled. The Lord had revealed himself, Job had seen him. Truly, God did but display the skirts of his robe, and unveil a part of his ways; but therein there was so much of ineffable glory, that Job laid his hand upon his mouth in token of his silent consent to the claims of the Everlasting One. God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind concerning the greatness of his power, the wonders of his workings, the splendour of his skill, the infinity of his wisdom. Carefully read that wonderful speech of the Most High to the trembling patriarch. I dare not call it poetry; for it rises as much above human poetry as the sublimest poetry stands above the poorest prose. It is simply a statement of facts, and these are mentioned in language of the simplest kind; but the overpowering glory of the utterance lies in the facts themselves. These sublime stanzas are spoken in the idiom of God. Those only know the peculiar style of the living God who have become familiar with the sacred word in spirit and in truth, and such persons can at once distinguish the speech of Jehovah from that of men. Read the divine address, that you may see how Jehovah caused the afflicted patriarch to feel him near.

In the confession which now lies before us, *Job acknowledges God's boundless power;* for he exclaims, "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." He felt that whatever the Lord chose to think or desire he could at once accomplish. Job had a glimpse of that omnipotence of which the height and depth no mind can ever measure.

Job sees his own folly. He speaks like a man in a maze or a muse, and he says, "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?" Look at the second verse of chapter thirty-eight, and you will see that he is quoting what God had said to him. The Lord's words are ringing in his ears, and in his anguish he repeats them, accepting them as justly applicable to himself. It is not far from being right

with us when the words of God can fitly become our words. "The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" And now Job replies, "I am that foolish one: I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." Job felt that what he had spoken concerning the Lord was in the main true; and the Lord himself said to Job's three friends, "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath"; but under a sense of the divine presence Job felt that even when he had spoken aright, he had spoken beyond his own proper knowledge, uttering speech whose depths of meaning he could not himself fathom. Many a holy prophet has done this, for inspired men are described as those who "enquired and searched diligently; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." It is not the thoughts of the prophet which have been inspired of God so much as their words; for frequently they were moved to speak prophecies which were quite beyond their own understanding: in fact, my brethren, are not all the great mysteries of the faith above human thought? and may we not fearlessly assert that no inspired man has ever known all the depth of God's meaning treasured up in the words which he himself has been led by the Spirit of God to write? Hence I assert that there is a verbal inspiration, or no inspiration at all worthy of the name. Job, as he comes before us in the text, is impressed with his own folly. He had to a large degree spoken what he felt sure was true, but he now feels that he did not understand what he said; and he at the same time tacitly confesses that he may have said in his bitterness many an unwise and unseemly thing, and therefore he bows his head before the Lord his God, and confesses that he has darkened counsel by words without knowledge, and uttered things that he understood not.

Notwithstanding, *the man of God proceeds to draw near unto the Lord*, before whom he bows himself. Foolish as he confesses himself to be, he does not therefore fly from the supreme wisdom. Although he knows that he has babbled ignorantly, he does not therefore seek to hide away from the Lord, as Adam did when he sought the shade of the trees of the garden. No, he takes up the Lord's words again, and is emboldened by them to approach. Read the thirty-eighth chapter, third verse; the Lord there says, "Gird up now thy loins like a man: for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me." Like a man in a dream, Job accepts the invitation, and answers, "Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me." This was brave and wise action. Whatever Job might be or might not be, he was a firm believer in his God, and in every word which the Lord was pleased to speak. He held even to discouraging words with desperate tenacity, and even learned to find honey in words which roared like lions upon him. Hence, when he is humbled in the dust, he recollects that God had bidden him draw nigh to him; and albeit to his fears that bidding may have sounded like a challenge, yet to his faith it becomes an

encouragement, and he in effect replies, "My God, I will venture to take thee at thy word. Thou biddest me come, and come I will. Dust and ashes though I be, I will do as thou dost allow me, and make my humble appeal to thee." Dear friends, it is altogether wrong to allow our sense of folly or of sin to drive us away from God; but it is altogether right when our humiliation draws us to the Lord, and our conscious need drives us to the throne of grace. The more foolish and sinful we are, the more urgent is our need to come to God, who alone can make us clean, and instruct us in the way of heavenly wisdom. I commend to you, therefore, God's servant Job, of whom I may say, whatever fault we may perceive in him, none of us could have behaved so gloriously as he did; unless, indeed, the Lord should give us like grace. The Lord led Job to find fault with himself, yet God himself does not complain of him, but even commends him. The three carping friends are commanded to bring a costly sacrifice, but this was not demanded from Job; and even when they brought their seven bullocks the Lord did not accept them till Job, whom they had condemned, had made intercession for them. Job bore away the palm from the conflict. So let us do as Job did, and make our approach unto the Lord in child-like confidence even when he seems to frown. Let us get where Job was when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." When we bow lowest before his throne, let not our humble bending have anything of distance in it. Lowlier before thee, O Lord, would we be; but at the same time our cry is, "Nearer to thee."

Thus we come to the text, having used the connection as a step to its door. On the text I make three observations: first, *we have sometimes very vivid impressions of God.* Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee." In the second place, *when we are favoured with these clearer views of God, we have lowlier thoughts of ourselves*—"wherefore I abhor myself"; and thirdly, *whenever we are thus made lowly, our heart is filled with repentance:* "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." May the Holy Spirit aid us in this experimental meditation!

I. First, then, WE HAVE SOMETIMES VERY VIVID IMPRESSIONS OF GOD. Job had long before *heard* of God, and that is a great matter. I do not think he meant merely that he had heard men speak of God, but that he had really, for himself, heard God's voice. He had been a reverent believer in the teachings of God, and an obedient servant to his commands: thus he had really heard God. The man who can say this can say a great deal. If God has ever been on speaking terms with you, you have much cause for gratitude. It is clear that you are not dead in sin, or if you were so when the Lord spoke to you, you are now alive; for his voice causes the dead to live. If you have heard God in the secret of your soul, you are a spiritual man; for only a spirit can hear the Spirit of God: none can discern the Lord but the man to whom he has given spiritual life. Job had heard God, but now he has a more vivid apprehension of him. It is sometimes said that one eye-witness is better than ten ear-witnesses, and there is much truth in the saying: certainly, facts perceived by the eye make a far more vivid impression upon the mind than the same facts heard by the ear. If we witness a sad scene of poverty it has far

more effect upon our heart than the most graphic description. Word-painting can never bring out the reality of a thing so well as the actual sight of it. Of course, Job could not literally see God, he does not mean to assert that he did; for "no man hath seen God at any time"; but Job means that he now had a view of God very much more clear than any which he had obtained before; in fact, as much clearer as eyesight is more clear than hearing.

Notice, that *in order to this close vision of God affliction had overtaken him.* It was not till after he had scraped himself with the potsherd, nor till his friends had scraped him with something worse than potsherds, that Job could say, "Mine eye seeth thee." Not till every camel and every sheep had been stolen, and every child was dead, could the afflicted patriarch cry, "Now mine eye seeth thee." Happy is that man who in prosperity can hear the voice of God in the tinkling of the sheep-bells of his abundant flocks, can hear him in the lowing of the oxen which cover his fields, and in the loving voices of dear children around him. But, mark you! prosperity is a painted window which shuts out much of the clear light of God, and only when the blue, and the crimson, and the golden tinge are removed, is the glass restored to its full transparency. Adversity thus takes away tinge, and colour, and dimness, and we see our God far better than before, if our eyes are prepared for the light. The Lord had taken everything away from Job, and this paved the way to his giving him more of himself. In the absence of other goods the good God is the better seen. In prosperity God is *heard*, and that is a blessing; but in adversity God is *seen*, and that is a greater blessing. Sanctified adversity quickens our spiritual sensitiveness. Sorrow after sorrow will wake up the spirit, and it will infuse into it a delicacy of perception which, perhaps, does not often come to us in any other way. I purposely say, "perhaps"; for I believe that some choice saints are favoured to reach it by smoother ways; but I think they are very few. The most of us are of such coarse material that we need melting, ay, and braying as in a mortar before we attain to that sacred softness by which the Lord God is joyfully perceived. O child of God, if thou art to suffer as much as Job suffered, if thou gettest to see the Lord with a spiritually enlightened eye, thou mayest be thankful for the sorrowful process! Who would not go to Patmos if he might see the visions of John, and who would not sit on the dunghill with Job to cry with him, "Now mine eye seeth thee"?

Possibly, also, *helpful to this was Job's desertion by his friends.* Job's three friends! Ah me, I know their kindred! They were most devotedly attached to him, no doubt; and how warmly they proved it! They had met together with him, and said soft and sweet things to him in those days when he moved like a prince among the nobles of his people, and every eye that saw him blessed him. But when they found him sitting "down among the ashes," they had altered thoughts of him. They suspected him; and though they knew nothing against him, yet they perceived that he was not in the same honour as before. Between a prince in ermine and the same man in sackcloth there is, to some minds, a great difference. Besides, the

instinct of self-preservation leads men to hold off from one who is sinking, lest they sink with him. After sitting in silence for a week, these excellent men found it in their hearts to assail him with their judicious observations. Here and there they inserted nice little bits of cruelty, all meant for his good. Was he not covered with sores? Was there not a cause for all this? By this torture God delivered Job from men: he was not likely after that to incur the curse which comes through making flesh your arm. He was also strengthened in personal independence of mind: he could clearly see that his breath was in his own nostrils, and not in other people's, and that he could stand alone by God's help, ay, even stand against those eminent men who had contended with him. Friends are all too apt to block out our view of our best Friend. When gracious minds are driven from men, they are drawn to God, and learn to sing with David, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." I do not doubt therefore that the desertion and upbraiding endured by Job from his friends, were a great help towards his being able to say to the Lord his God, "Now mine eye seeth thee." Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar might have interposed between Job and God, and their kindly help might have placed Job under lasting obligations to them; but now he looks alone to God, and honours him only.

Still, *before Job could see the Lord, there was a special manifestation on God's part to him.* "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind." God must really come and in a gracious way make a display of himself to his servants, or else they will not see him. Your afflictions will not of themselves reveal God to you. If the Lord himself does not unveil his face, your sorrow may even blind and harden you, and make you rebellious. The desertion and unkindness of friends is, also, no help to grace: its tendency is to sour and imperil your piety, if it act out its natural influence: there must be a special revealing of the Lord to our own souls before we shall get such a clear apprehension of him as Job intended by the words, "Now mine eye seeth thee." Read through the thirty-eighth chapter, and see how Jehovah declares his wisdom and his power: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?" "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?" Here was a marvellous field for thought. The Lord speaks in nature, and it is done. His glory is seen in heaven and earth, in the sea, and all deep places. God is, and there is none beside him. Yea, Jehovah is God alone.

Nor did the Lord fail to show to Job his justice, defying him to emulate it. See the fortieth chapter, eleventh and twelfth verses:—"Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and

abase him. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place." God is the supreme governor, and he beareth not the sword in vain; he is impartial and infallible, and none can disannul his judgment, or condemn his acts.

I need not tarry to say to you that all through that wonderful address of the Lord to his servant he is saying, in so many words, "I am God; but who art thou?" The Lord is proving that nothing is impossible to his power and his wisdom. He had, after all, not allowed his servant to sink out of his reach. He was always able to rescue him. You learn here, also, that God is not amenable to our judgment. He giveth no account of his matters. He makes Job feel that he is God, and then there is an end of the matter. No apology is made to Job, and no explanation is given him: he must bow in unreserved submission, and surrender unconditionally; and he does so.

Notice how by the Lord's first words Job was silenced, and could only whisper, "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further." Thus far he worshipped; but he must yet go further, until he cries, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

II. We have now reached our second point—WHEN WE HAVE THESE VIVID APPREHENSIONS OF GOD, WE HAVE LOWLIER VIEWS OF OURSELVES.

Why are the wicked so proud? It is because they forget God. Why did Pharaoh dare to say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" It was because he did not know Jehovah; but after those ten plagues, he altered his tone, and cried out, "Intreat the Lord (for it is enough"). Even his great pride was forced to bow before Jehovah when judgments were let loose upon him. If men knew God, how it would change their thoughts and talk! If they could have even an indistinct idea "by the hearing of the ear," many of them would never be so irreverent as they now are, nor so lofty in their ideas of their own wisdom; but if they could "see" him as Job did, and behold his inexpressible glory, they would become far more meek and lowly.

Here let me observe that *God himself is the measure of rectitude*, and hence, when we come to think of God, we soon discover our own shortcomings and transgressions. Too often we compare ourselves among ourselves, and are not wise. A man says, "I am not so bad as many, and I am quite as good as such a one, who is in high repute." What if it be so? Dost thou judge thyself by other erring ones? Thy measuring line is false; it is not the standard of the sanctuary. If thou wouldest be right, thou must measure thyself with the holiness of God; God himself is the standard of perfect holiness, truth, love, and justice; and if thou fallest short of his glory, thou hast fallen short of what thou oughtest to be. When I think of this, self-righteousness seems to me to be a wretched insanity.

If you would know what God is, he sets himself before us in the person of his dear Son. In every respect in which we fall short of the perfect character of Jesus, in that respect we sin. There is no better description of sin that I know of than this: "Sin is any want of conformity to the law of God," and God's law is the transcript of his own mind. Wherein in any moral or spiritual respect, we

fall short of the divine character, we to that extent fall into sin. No, my brethren, we cannot hear the ceaseless cry of the cherubim, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," without at once sinking, sinking, sinking, till we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Permit me to suggest to each one here who has a high idea of himself, and has no sense of self-abhorrence, that such self-honour must arise from ignorance of God; for there is such an immeasurable distance between the perfection of God and our faultiness that our true position is that of penitent humility.

Our next reflection is this: *God himself is the object of every transgression*, and this sets sin in a terrible light. Sin frequently has our fellow-men as its object; but even then I am not incorrect in what I have said, for sins against our fellow-men are still sins against God. It would be well if we felt with David—"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Think, then, of sin as an offence against God, committed in God's presence, committed while he is looking on. My beloved friends, in this light observe the wantonness of sin; for who could wish to offend against a perfectly holy and entirely loving God? If God is all he should be, why do we not agree with him? If in God we see every possible and conceivable good, why do we set up ourselves, our wills, our desires in opposition to him? He is so gracious towards man that he may be described by that one word "love"; and if it be so, why do we not love him with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength? Every shortcoming and every transgression, therefore, is a wanton offence against infinite goodness. If Jehovah were a tyrant, there might be some excuse for rebellion; but since he is infinitely just and loving, it is atrocious that his own creatures, ay, his own children, should offend against him.

Note, next, the impertinence of sin. How dare we transgress against God? O man, who art thou that rebellest against God? How darest thou to do to his face that which he forbids thee? How darest thou to leave undone in his very presence that which thy Lord commands thee to do? This makes sin a piece of presumption, a daring and glaring provocation of the Lord God. Thus it is evident that in the immediate presence of God sin doth like itself appear.

The fact that sin is levelled at God makes us bow in lowliness. Although some of us can hold our heads high among our fellow-men, and we can say, "I am neither a drunkard, nor a thief, nor a liar, neither have I offended against the laws of integrity and charity"; yet when we come before God, we perceive that we have not dealt towards him as we ought to have done. To him we have been thieves, robbing him of his glory. "Will a man rob God?" To him we have been liars: we have dealt treacherously, and have broken our promises. To him we have been ingrates; to him we have been worse than brutes. Instead of equity, we have dealt towards God iniquity. Instead of love, we have dealt out enmity. The Lord has nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him. Even our holy things have been defiled; our best tears need to be wept over, and our truest faith is spoiled with unbelief. Oh, when

we think of this, we can understand why Job says, "Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself."

Once more, *when God is seen with admiration, then of necessity we are filled with self-loathing.* The more you appreciate God, the more you will depreciate yourself. While the thought of God rises higher, and higher, and higher, you also will sink lower and lower in your own esteem. The word used by Job, "I abhor myself," is a strong one. It might be paraphrased thus, "I nauseate myself. I am disgusted with myself. I cast forth from my soul every proud thought of myself —cast it out from me as a sickening and intolerable thing." Ah, dear friends, you have not seen God aright if your abhorrence turns upon your fellow-men; but if the one man you abhor is yourself, you are not mistaken! A sight of God will make us regard our fellow-creatures with sympathy, as involved in the same sin and misery as ourselves. As a common danger in a sinking ship makes every man a brother to his fellow, so a clear sense of our common guilt and ruin will make us feel the brotherhood of man: but, on the other hand, a sight of God will prevent our dreaming of personal excellence, and will compel us to take the lowest room. Since God is glorious in our eyes, we become ashamed. We adore God, and in contrast, we abhor self.

Do you know what self-loathing means? Some of you do, I know. And I am sure that in proportion as you truly love, reverence, and worship God, in that proportion you are full of abhorrence of self. You fine gentlemen, who hold your heads so high that you can scarcely get through common door-ways, you know nothing of this! You high and mighty ladies, who cannot condescend to associate with any who are not of your superior rank; and you purse-proud men, who expect all to worship the golden calf which you have set up, you know nothing about this. O you wonderfully wise men, you intellectual persons, who so modestly dub yourselves "thoughtful and cultured," you snuff out a poor evangelical believer as if he were an idiot; may the Lord give you an hour of Job's "I abhor myself," and then you will be bearable; but as you now are, you are a trial! While the dunghill is your proper place, you covet the throne of the Almighty; but he will not yield it to you: you would improve upon divine revelation, and revise infallible inspiration; but your boasting is vain. Oh that you had a manifestation of God, and then you would know yourselves! God grant it to you for his mercy's sake!

III. Thirdly, I have to show you that SUCH A SIGHT FILLS THE HEART WITH TRUE REPENTANCE. Job says, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The word "myself" has been added by the translators; and they could hardly have done otherwise. Job's expression, however, refers to all that had come out of himself, or had lurked within himself. He abhorred all that he had been doing and saying. He says, "I abhor, and repent in dust and ashes." What did he repent of? I think Job repented, first, of *that tremendous curse which he had pronounced upon the day of his birth.* It was terrific. See third chapter. "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it

not come into the number of the months." He wished he had perished from the womb, that his birthcry had been his first and his last:— "For now should I have lain still and been quiet." Before God Job has to eat his bitter words. It is always a pity to say too much in moments of agony, because we may have to unsay that which escapes us. He would not curse God, but he did curse the day of his birth, and it was unseemly. Of this he unfeignedly repents.

Next, Job heartily repented of *his desire to die.* In the sixth chapter he expresses it as he did several times: he says, "Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!" Do you wonder that he said this? Was ever man so tried? I do not wonder at all, even at his cursing the day of his birth, considering all the bodily pain and mental irritation which he was enduring at the time. I wonder that he played the man as well as he did; but still he must have looked back with deep regret upon his impatience. The last verses of the book run thus: "After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days." This is the same man who begged to die. Elijah also said, "Let me die, I am not better than my fathers," and yet he never died at all. What poor creatures we are! What haste impatience breeds!

Job had to repent, next, of *all his complaints against God.* These had been very many. In the seventh chapter he turns to God and says, "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me? When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life. I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity. How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?" Ah! poor Job had to swallow his murmuring as well as his spittle, for he repents of every rebellious thought. He complains of his having complained, and with self-abhorrence he repents in dust and ashes.

I do not doubt but what Job repented of *his despair.* The ninth and tenth chapters, and many other passages wherein Job speaks, are tinged with hopelessness. He felt as if God had left him a prey to the enemy; but this was not true. The Lord has never deserted any one of his people. There is not on record in all the history of the ages a case in which God has failed them that trust him. Has he not said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"? and he never has left nor forsaken any believer; yet Job evidently thought that he had done so, and he was greatly troubled.

Job had uttered *rash challenges of God.* In the ninth chapter, at the thirty-fourth verse, he says that there is no daysman between him and God, or else he would plead his cause: "Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me: then would I speak, and not fear him: but it is not so with me." This was wrong, and Job

abhorred himself for having fallen into so ill a temper, and so little becoming in a man of God.

His critics goaded him by cruelly charging him with hypocrisy and wickedness, and Job vindicated himself with great earnestness, appealing to God, and saying, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked." This was true. The indignation of an honest heart cannot be blamed for speaking thus to men; but Job felt that he could not speak thus before the Lord. He could plead his innocence in the common courts of men, and there he could well enough defend himself; but when the matter came into the King's own court, he could not answer in the same strain, but felt compelled to plead guilty. Job has to retract all his pleadings and challenges. If the case is to be heard as "Jehovah *versus* Job," then Job yields the point unreservedly. Who is he that can contend with his Maker over a matter of holiness? We are wrong, God must be right!

Job had also to confess that his statements had been a darkening of wisdom by words without knowledge. Sometimes we say, "I perfectly understand *that;* I could clear up that mystery." We define this and define that to our brethren; but when we get into the presence of God, we find that our definitions are the proofs of our ignorance. "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." Job drops his wisdom as well as his righteousness, although he was one of the wisest and holiest of men. While we see not God, we fancy that we can read all the riddles of his word; but when we behold him more nearly, we say with David, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." We are apt to judge the Lord by feeble sense instead of trusting him for his grace. This cometh of evil. In the presence of God Job bowed his head and repented of all his suspicions and mistrusts; and this is what we must do if, in the day of our sorrow, we have been petulant and unbelieving.

Let me pass on. According to our text, *repentance puts man into the lowest place.* He says, "I repent in dust and ashes." "Dust and ashes"—that signifies the dust-heap, or what in Scotland they call the "midden." Job had made dust and ashes his head-quarters. The dunghill, the refuse place, was now the spot which he felt to be fitted for him. Repentance puts us in a lowly seat. You have heard sometimes, I dare say, among the beautiful nothings of the modern school, the mention of "the dignity of human nature." Behold a throne for the "dignity of human nature." Yonder dust and ashes are for this proud royalty. The dust-heap is for human nature in its glory, when it has on its richest robes. When it takes its worst place, where is it? The lowest pit of hell, prepared for the devil and his angels, is the fit place for man when he has at last come to his true estate. I say that when man wears his best Sunday righteousness, he is even then only fit for the midden; and every man of God that has been brought to true repentance, owns that it is so. Alas! saith the man that sees his sinfulness, I should be a disgrace to any dust shoot; if I were cast away with the rotten refuse of the house, it might creep away from me, because my sin is a worse corruption than physical nature knows of, an insult even to the worm of decay, since in common putridity

there is not the foul offence of moral evil. Repentance, you see, makes a man take the lowest place.

Next, note that *all real repentance is joined with holy sorrow and self-loathing.* I have read in the sermons of certain teachers that "Repentance is only a change of mind." That may be true; but what a change of mind it is! It is not such a change of mind as some of you underwent this morning when you said, "It is really too cold to go out," but afterwards you braved the snow, and came to the Tabernacle. Oh, no! repentance is a thorough and radical change of mind, and it is accompanied with real sorrow for sin, and self-loathing. A repentance in which there is no sorrow for sin will ruin the soul. Repentance without sorrow for sin is not the repentance of God's elect. If thou canst look upon sin without sorrow, then thou hast never looked on Christ. A faith-look at Jesus breaks the heart, both for sin and from sin. Try thyself by this test.

But, next, *repentance has comfort in it.* It is to my mind rather extraordinary that the Hebrew word, which is justly translated "repent," is also used in two or three places at least in the Old Testament to express comfort. Isaac, it is said, took Rebekah to his mother's tent, and was "*comforted* after his mother's death." Here the word is the same as that which is here rendered "repent." Isaac's mind was changed as to the death of his mother. As, then, there is in the Hebrew word just a tinge of comfort, so in repentance itself, with all its sorrow, there are traces of joy. Repentance is a bitter-sweet or a sweet-bitter. After thou hast tasted it in thy mouth as gall, it will go down into thy belly, and be sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

The door of repentance opens into the halls of joy. Job's repentance in dust and ashes was the sign of his deliverance. God turned his wrath upon the three critics, but justified Job, and gave him the honourable office of intercessor on their behalf. Then "the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." "The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning," and the turning point was that sitting down in the dust and ashes. When you are brought as low as you can be, the next turn must be upward. Down with you, then! Off with the feathers of your pride, and the finery of your self-righteousness! Down with you among the useless and worthless things! From that point you will ascend. The more crushed, humbled, exhausted, and near to death you are, the more prepared you are for God to raise you up.

Job was an unrivalled saint; none of us can compare with him; and if that perfect and upright man had to say, "I abhor myself," what will you and I say when we see God? We shall by-and-by behold him on the judgment-seat; how shall we endure it? If you have no righteousness but your own, you will stand naked to your shame in the day when the Lord appeareth. You self-righteous men, dare you go before God in your own righteousness? If you dare, I marvel at your presumption. Job dared not. He could stand up boldly before his accusers, but when before God he was in another attitude. When it comes to dying and appearing before the Most High, you that have no righteousness but one of your own spinning,

what will you do? If God should take away your soul at once, could you dare to go before him in that fine character of yours, tha wonderful morality, that large generosity? If you have any sense left, you dare not attempt such a thing.

What shall you and I do? Brethren, we are not afraid; for there is a righteousness of God which is given to us by faith through Jesus Christ. God himself cannot find any fault with his own righteousness; and if he gives me his own righteousness, even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ, which is to all and upon all them that believe, then I may hope to sit at last, not on the midden, but on the throne, rejoicing to find myself in Christ Jesus, crowned with a crown which I shall delight to cast at his feet. How happy are we if we can sing—

> "Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
> My beauty are, my glorious dress;
> Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
> With joy shall I lift up my head"!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job vi. 1—18; xxxviii. 1—41; xl. 1—5; xlii. 1—6.

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THE WORD A SWORD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 17TH, 1887, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."—Hebrews iv. 12.

THOSE who are fond of a labyrinth of exposition will find a maze perplexing to the last degree if they will read the various commentators and expositors upon this verse. This is the question: By the Word of God, are we here to understand the Incarnate Word, the Divine Logos, who was in the beginning with God; or does the passage relate to this inspired Book, and to the gospel, which is the kernel of it, as it is set forth in the preaching of the truth in the power of the Holy Ghost? You shall find Dr. John Owen, with a very large number of eminent servants of God, defending the first theory, that the Son of God is doubtless here spoken of; and I confess that they seem to me to defend it with arguments which I should not like to controvert. Much more is to be said on this side of the question than I can here bring before you. On the other side, we find John Calvin, with an equally grand array of divines, all declaring that it must be the Book that is meant, the gospel, the revelation of God in the Book. Their interpretation of the passage is not to be set aside, and I feel convinced that they all give as good reasons for their interpretation as those who come to the other conclusion. Where such Doctors differ, I am not inclined to present any interpretation of my own which can be set in competition with theirs, though I may venture to propound one which comprehends them all, and so comes into conflict with none. It is a happy circumstance if we can see a way to agree with all those who did not themselves agree. But I have been greatly instructed by the mere fact that it should be difficult to know whether in this passage the Holy Ghost is speaking of the Christ of God, or the Book of God. This shows us a great truth, which we might not otherwise have so clearly noted. How much that can be said of the Lord Jesus may be also said of the inspired volume! How closely are these two allied! How certainly do those who despise the one reject the other! How intimately are the Word made flesh, and the Word uttered by inspired men, joined together!

It may be most accurate to interpret this passage as relating both to the Word of God incarnate, and the Word of God inspired. Weave the two into one thought, for God hath joined them together, and you will then see fresh lights and new meanings in the text. The Word of God, namely, this revelation of himself in Holy Scripture, is all it is here described to be, because Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, is in it. He doth, as it were, incarnate himself as the divine truth in this visible and manifest revelation; and thus it becomes living and powerful, dividing and discerning. As the Christ reveals God, so this Book reveals Christ, and therefore it partakes, as the Word of God, in all the attributes of the Incarnate Word; and we may say many of the same things of the written Word as of the embodied Word; in fact, they are now so linked together that it would be impossible to divide them. This I like to think of, because there are some nowadays who deny every doctrine of revelation, and yet, forsooth, they praise the Christ. The Teacher is spoken of in the most flattering style, and then his teaching is rejected, except so far as it may coincide with the philosophy of the moment. They talk much about Jesus, while that which is the real Jesus, namely, his gospel, and his inspired Word, they cast away. I believe I do but correctly describe them when I say that, like Judas, they betray the Son of man with a kiss. They even go so far as to cry up the names of the doctrines, though they use them in a different sense that they may deceive. They talk of loyalty to Christ, and reverence for the Sermon on the Mount; but they use vain words. I am charged with sowing suspicion. I do sow it, and desire to sow it. Too many Christian people are content to hear anything so long as it is put forth by a clever man, in a taking manner; I want them to try the spirits, whether they be of God, for many false prophets have gone forth into the world. What God has joined together these modern thinkers wilfully put asunder, and separate the Revealer from his own revelation. I believe the Saviour thinks their homage to be more insulting than their scorn would be. Well may he do so, for they bow before him, and say, "Hail, Master!" while their foot is on the blood of his covenant, and their souls abhor the doctrine of his substitutionary sacrifice. They are crucifying the Lord afresh, and putting him to an open shame, by denying the Lord that bought them, by daring to deride his purchase of his people as a "mercantile transaction," and I know not what of blasphemy beside.

Christ and his Word must go together. What is true of the Christ is here predicated both of him and of his Word. Behold, this day the everlasting gospel has Christ within it. He rides in it as in a chariot. He rides in it as, of old, Jehovah "did ride upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." It is only because Jesus is not dead that the Word becomes living and effectual, "and sharper than any two-edged sword"; for, if you leave Christ out of it, you have left out its vitality and power. As I have told you that we will not have Christ without the Word, so neither will we have the Word without Christ. If you leave Christ out of Scripture, you have left out the essential truth which it is written to declare. Ay, if you leave out of it Christ as a Substitute, Christ in his death, Christ in his garments dyed in blood, you have left out of it all that is living and powerful.

How often have we reminded you that as concerning the gospel, even as concerning every man, "the blood is the life thereof": a bloodless gospel is a lifeless gospel! A famous picture has been lately produced, which represents our Lord before Pilate. It has deservedly won great attention. A certain excellent newspaper, which brings out for a very cheap price a large number of engravings, has given an engraving of this picture; but, inasmuch as the painting was too large for the paper to give the whole, they have copied a portion of it. It is interesting to note that they have given us Pilate here, and Caiaphas there, but since there was no room for Jesus upon the sheet, they have left out that part of the design. When I saw the picture, I thought that it was wonderfully characteristic of a great deal of modern preaching. See Pilate here, Caiaphas there, and the Jews yonder—but the Victim, bound and scourged for human sin, is omitted. Possibly, in the case of the publication, the figure of the Christ will appear in the next number; but even if he should appear in the next sermon of our preachers of the new theology, it will be as a moral example, and not as the Substitute for the guilty, the Sin-bearer by whose death we are redeemed. When we hear a sermon with no Christ in it, we hope that he will come out next Sunday; at the same time, the preaching is, so far, spoilt, and the presentation of the gospel is entirely ruined so long as the principal figure is left out. Oh, it is a sad thing to have to stand in any house of prayer and listen to the preaching, and then have to cry, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him"! Rest assured that they have laid him in a tomb. You may be quite certain of that. They have put him away as a dead thing, and to them he is as good as dead. True believer, you may comfort your heart with this recollection, that he will rise again. He cannot be holden by the bonds of death in any sense; and, though his own church should bury him, and lay the huge lid of the most enormous sarcophagus of heresy upon him, the Redeemer will rise again, and his truth with him, and he and his Word will live and reign together for ever and ever.

Brethren, you will understand I am going to speak about the Word of God as being, like the Lord Jesus, the revelation of God. This inspired volume is that gospel whereby you have received life, unless you have heard it in vain. It is this gospel, with Jesus within it, Jesus working by it, which is said to be living and effectual, and "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." I shall only talk with you in very simple style. First, *concerning the qualities of the Word of God;* and, secondly, *concerning certain practical lessons which these qualities suggest to us.*

I. First let me speak CONCERNING THE QUALITIES OF THE WORD OF GOD. It is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword."

The Word of God is said to be "*quick.*" I am sorry the translators have used that word, because it is apt to be mistaken as meaning speedy, and that is not the meaning at all; it means alive, or living. "Quick" is the old English word for alive, and so we read of the "quick and dead." The Word of God is alive. This is a living Book. This is a mystery which only living men, quickened by the Spirit of God, will

fully comprehend. Take up any other book except the Bible, and there may be a measure of power in it, but there is not that indescribable vitality in it which breathes, and speaks, and pleads, and conquers in the case of this sacred volume. We have in the book-market many excellent selections of choice passages from great authors, and in a few instances the persons who have made the extracts have been at the pains to place under their quotations from Scripture the name "David," or "Jesus," but this is worse than needless. There is a style of majesty about God's Word, and with this majesty a vividness never found elsewhere. No other writing has within it a heavenly life whereby it works miracles, and even imparts life to its reader. It is a living and incorruptible seed. It moves, it stirs itself, it lives, it communes with living men as a living Word. Solomon saith concerning it, "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." Have you never known what that means? Why, the Book has wrestled with me; the Book has smitten me; the Book has comforted me; the Book has smiled on me; the Book has frowned on me; the Book has clasped my hand; the Book has warmed my heart. The Book weeps with me, and sings with me; it whispers to me, and it preaches to me; it maps my way, and holds up my goings; it was to me the Young Man's Best Companion, and it is still my Morning and Evening Chaplain. It is a live Book: all over alive; from its first chapter to its last word it is full of a strange, mystic vitality, which makes it have pre-eminence over every other writing for every living child of God.

See, my brothers, *our* words, *our* books, our spoken or our printed words by-and-by die out. How many books there are which nobody will ever read now because they are out of date! There are many books that I could read profitably when I was a youth, but they would teach me nothing now. There are also certain religious works which I could read with pleasure during the first ten years of my spiritual life; but I should never think of reading them now, any more than I should think of reading the "a-b ab," and the "b-a ba," of my childhood. Christian experience causes us to outgrow the works which were the class-books of our youth. We may outgrow teachers and pastors, but not apostles and prophets. That human system which was once vigorous and influential may grow old, and at length lose all vitality; but the Word of God is always fresh, and new, and full of force. No wrinkle mars its brow: no trembling is in its foot. Here, in the Old and New Testaments, we have at once the oldest and the newest of books. Homer and Hesiod are infants to the more ancient parts of this venerable volume, and yet the gospel which it contains is as truly *new* as this morning's newspaper. I say again that our words come and go: as the trees of the forest multiply their leaves only to cast them off as withered things, so the thoughts and theories of men are but for the season, and then they fade and rot into nothingness. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

Its vitality is such as it can impart to its readers. Hence, you will often find, when you converse with revelation, that if you yourself are dead when you begin to read, it does not matter, you will be quickened

as you peruse it. You need not bring life *to* the Scripture; you shall draw life *from* the Scripture. Oftentimes a single verse has made us start up, as Lazarus came forth at the call of the Lord Jesus. When our soul has been faint, and ready to die, a single word, applied to the heart by the Spirit of God, has aroused us; for it is a quickening as well as a living Word. I am so glad of this, because at times I feel altogether dead; but the Word of God is not dead; and coming to it, we are like the dead man, who, when he was put into the grave of the prophet, rose again as soon as he touched his bones. Even these bones of the prophets, these words of theirs spoken and written thousands of years ago, will impart life to those who come into contact with them. The Word of God is thus overflowingly alive.

Hence, I may add it is so alive that you need never be afraid that it will become extinct. They dream—they dream that they have put us among the antiquities, those of us who preach the old gospel that our fathers loved! They sneer at the doctrines of the apostles and of the reformers, and declare that believers in them are left high and dry, the relics of an age which has long since ebbed away. Yes, so they say! But what they say may not after all be true; for the gospel is such a living gospel that, if it were cut into a thousand shreds, every particle of it would live and grow. If it were buried beneath a thousand avalanches of error, it would shake off the incubus and rise from its grave. If it were cast into the midst of fire it would walk through the flame as it has done many a time, as though it were in its natural element. The Reformation was largely due to a copy of the Scriptures left in the seclusion of a monastery, and there hidden till Luther came under its influence, and his heart furnished soil for the living seed to grow in. Leave but a single New Testament in a Popish community, and the evangelical faith may at any moment come to the front, even though no preacher of it may ever have come that way. Plants unknown in certain regions have suddenly sprung from the soil: the seeds have been wafted on the winds, carried by birds, or washed ashore by the waves of the sea. So vital are seeds that they live and grow wherever they are borne; and even after lying deep in the soil for centuries, when the upturning spade has brought them to the surface, they have germinated at once. Thus is it with the Word of God: it liveth and abideth for ever, and in every soil and under all circumstances it is prepared to prove its own life by the energy with which it grows and produces fruit to the glory of God. How vain, as well as wicked, are all attempts to kill the gospel. Those who attempt the crime, in any fashion, will be for ever still beginning, and never coming near their end. They will be disappointed in all cases, whether they would slay it with persecution, smother it with worldliness, crush it with error, starve it with neglect, poison it with misrepresentation, or drown it with infidelity. While God liveth his Word shall live. Let us praise God for that. We have an immortal gospel, incapable of being destroyed, which shall live and shine when yon lamp of the sun has consumed its scant supply of oil.

In our text the Word is said to be "*powerful*" or "active." Perhaps "energetic" is the best rendering, or almost as well, "effectual." Holy Scripture is full of power and energy. Oh, the majesty of the Word

of God! They charge us with Bibliolatry: it is a crime of their own inventing, of which few are guilty. If there be such things as venial sins, surely an undue reverence of Holy Scripture is one of them. To me the Bible is not God, but it is God's voice, and I do not hear it without awe. What an honour to have it as one's calling, to study, to expound, and to publish this sacred Word! I cannot help feeling that the man who preaches the Word of God is standing, not upon a mere platform, but upon a throne. You may study your sermon, my brother, and you may be a great rhetorician, and be able to deliver it with wonderful fluency and force; but the only power that is effectual for the highest design of preaching is the power which does not lie in your word, nor in my word, but in the Word of God. Have you never noticed, when persons are converted, that they almost always attribute it to some text that was quoted in the sermon? It is God's Word, not our comment on God's Word, which saves souls. The Word of God is powerful for all sacred ends. How powerful it is to convince men of sin! We have seen the self-righteous turned inside out by the revealed truth of God. Nothing else could have brought home to them such unpleasant truth, and compelled them to see themselves as in a clear mirror, but the searching Word of God. How powerful it is for conversion! It comes on board a man, and without asking any leave from him, it just puts its hand on the helm, and turns him round in the opposite direction from that in which he was going before; and the man gladly yields to the irresistible force which influences his understanding and rules his will. The Word of God is that by which sin is slain, and grace is born in the heart. It is the light which brings life with it. How active and energetic it is, when the soul is convinced of sin, in bringing it forth into gospel liberty! We have seen men shut up as in the devil's own dungeon, and we have tried to get them free. We have shaken the bars of iron, but we could not tear them out so as to set the captives at liberty. But the Word of the Lord is a great breaker of bolts and bars. It not only casts down the strongholds of doubt, but it cuts off the head of Giant Despair. No cell or cellar in Doubting Castle can hold a soul in bondage when the Word of God, which is the master-key, is once put to its true use, and made to throw back bolts of despondency. It is living and energetic for encouragement and enlargement. O beloved, what a wonderful power the gospel has to bring us comfort! It brought us to Christ at the first, and it still leads us to look to Christ till we grow like him. God's children are not sanctified by legal methods, but by gracious ones. The Word of God, the gospel of Christ, is exceedingly powerful in promoting sanctification, and bringing about that whole-hearted consecration which is both our duty and our privilege. May the Lord cause his Word to prove its power in us by its making us fruitful unto every good work to do his will! Through the "washing of water by the Word"—that is, through the washing by the Word—may we be cleansed every day, and made to walk in white before the Lord, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things!

The Word of God, then, is quick and powerful in our own personal experience, and we shall find it to be so if we use it in labouring to bless our fellow-men. Dear brethren, if you seek to do good in this sad world, and want a powerful weapon to work with, stick to the gospel,

the living gospel, the old, old gospel. There is a power in it sufficient to meet the sin and death of human nature. All the thoughts of men, use them as earnestly as you may, will be like tickling Leviathan with a straw. Nothing can get through the scales of this monster but the Word of God. This is a weapon made of sterner stuff than steel, and it will cut through coats of mail. Nothing can resist it. "Where the word of a king is, there is power." About the gospel, when spoken with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, there is the same omnipotence as there was in the Word of God when in the beginning he spoke to the primeval darkness saying, "Let there be light," and there was light. Oh how we ought to prize and love the revelation of God; not only because it is full of life, but because that life is exceedingly energetic and effectual, and operates so powerfully upon the lives and hearts of men!

Next, the apostle tells us that this Word is *cutting*. "Cutting" would be as correct a translation as that of our own version: it is "more cutting than any two-edged sword." I suppose the apostle means by the description "two-edged" that it is all edge. A sword with two edges has no blunt side: it cuts both this way and that. The revelation of God given us in Holy Scripture is edge all over. It is alive in every part, and in every part keen to cut the conscience, and wound the heart. Depend upon it, there is not a superfluous verse in the Bible, nor a chapter which is useless. Doctors say of certain drugs that they are *inert*—they have no effect upon the system one way or the other. Now, there is not an inert passage in the Scriptures; every line has its virtues. Have you never heard of one who heard read, as the lesson for the Sabbath-day, that long chapter of names, wherein it is written that each patriarch lived so many hundred years, "*and he died*"? Thus it ends the notice of the long life of Methuselah with "and he died." The repetition of the words, "and he died," woke the thoughtless hearer to a sense of his mortality, and led to his coming to the Saviour. I should not wonder that, away there in the Chronicles, among those tough Hebrew names, there have been conversions wrought in cases unknown to us as yet. Anyhow, any bit of Holy Writ is very dangerous to play with, and many a man has been wounded by the Scriptures when he has been idly, or even profanely reading them. Doubters have meant to break the Word to pieces, and it has broken them. Yea, fools have taken up portions, and studied them, on purpose to ridicule them, and they have been sobered and vanquished by that which they repeated in sport. There was one who went to hear Mr. Whitefield—a member of the "Hell-fire Club," a desperate fellow. He stood up at the next meeting of his abominable associates, and he delivered Mr. Whitefield's sermon with wonderful accuracy, imitating his very tone and manner. In the middle of his exhortation he converted himself, and came to a sudden pause, sat down broken-hearted, and confessed the power of the gospel. That club was dissolved. That remarkable convert was Mr. Thorpe, of Bristol, whom God so greatly used afterwards in the salvation of others. I would rather have you read the Bible to mock at it than not read it at all. I would rather that you came to hear the Word of God out of hatred to it than that you never came at all.

The Word of God is so sharp a thing, so full of cutting power, that you

may be bleeding under its wounds before you have seriously suspected the possibility of such a thing. You cannot come near the gospel without its having a measure of influence over you; and, God blessing you, it may cut down and kill your sins when you have no idea that such a work is being done. Dear friends, have you not found the Word of God to be very cutting, more cutting than a two-edged sword, so that your heart has bled inwardly, and you have been unable to resist the heavenly stroke? I trust you and I may go on to know more and more of its edge till it has killed us outright, so far as the life of sin is concerned. Oh, to be sacrificed unto God, and his Word to be the sacrificial knife! Oh, that his Word were put to the throat of every sinful tendency, every sinful habit, and every sinful thought! There is no sin-killer like the Word of God. Wherever it comes, it comes as a sword, and inflicts death upon evil. Sometimes when we are praying that we may feel the power of the Word we hardly know what we are praying for. I saw a venerable brother the other day, and he said to me, "I remember speaking with you when you were nineteen or twenty years of age, and I never forgot what you said to me. I had been praying with you in the prayer-meeting that God would give us the Holy Ghost to the full, and you said to me afterwards, 'My dear brother, do you know what you asked God for?' I answered, 'Yes.' But you very solemnly said to me, 'The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning, and few are prepared for the inward conflict which is meant by these two words.'" My good old friend told me that at the time he did not understand what I meant, but thought me a singular youth. "Ah!" said he, "I see it now, but it is only by a painful experience that I have come to the full comprehension of it." Yes, when Christ comes, he comes not to send peace on the earth, but a sword; and that sword begins at home, in our own souls, killing, cutting, hacking, breaking in pieces. Blessed is that man who knows the Word of the Lord by its exceeding sharpness, for it kills nothing but that which ought to be killed. It quickens and gives new life to all that is of God; but the old depraved life which ought to die, it hews in pieces, as Samuel destroyed Agag before the Lord. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword."

But I want you to notice next, that it has a further quality: *it is piercing.* While it has an edge like a sword, it has also a point like a rapier, "Piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." The difficulty with some men's hearts is to get at them. In fact, there is no spiritually penetrating the heart of any natural man except by this piercing instrument, the Word of God. But the rapier of revelation will go through anything. Even when the "heart is as fat as grease," as the Psalmist says, yet this Word will pierce it. Into the very marrow of the man the sacred truth will pass, and find him out in a way in which he cannot even find himself out. As it is with our own hearts, so it is with the hearts of other men. Dear friends, the gospel can find its way anywhere. Men may wrap themselves up in prejudice, but this rapier can find out the joints of their harness; they may resolve not to believe, and may feel content in their self-righteousness, but this piercing weapon will find its way. The arrows of the Word of God are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall

under him. Let us not be afraid to trust this weapon whenever we are called up to face the adversaries of the Lord Jesus. We can pin them, and pierce them, and finish them with this.

And next, *the Word of God is said to be discriminating.* It divides asunder soul and spirit. Nothing else could do that, for the division is difficult. In a great many ways writers have tried to describe the difference between soul and spirit; but I question whether they have succeeded. No doubt it is a very admirable definition to say, "The soul is the life of the natural man, and the spirit the life of the regenerate or spiritual man." But it is one thing to define and quite another thing to divide.

We will not attempt to solve this metaphysical problem. God's Word comes in, and it shows man the difference between that which is of the soul, and that which is of the spirit; that which is of man, and that which is of God; that which is of grace, and that which is of nature. The Word of God is wonderfully decisive about this. Oh, how much there is of our religion which is—to quote a spiritual poet—"The child of nature finely-dressed, but not the living child": it is of the soul, and not of the spirit! The Word of God lays down very straight lines, and separates between the natural and the spiritual, the carnal and the divine. You would think sometimes, from the public prayers and preaching of clergymen, that we were all Christian people; but Holy Scripture does not sanction this flattering estimate of our condition. When we are gathered together, the prayers are for us all, and the preaching is for us all, as being all God's people—all born so, or made so by baptism, no question about that! Yet the way the Word of God takes is of quite another sort. It talks about the dead, and the living; about the repentant, and the impenitent; about the believing, and the unbelieving; about the blind, and the seeing; about those called of God, and those who still lie in the arms of the wicked one. It speaks with keen discrimination and separates the precious from the vile. I believe there is nothing in the world that divides congregations, as they ought to be divided, like the plain preaching of the Word of God.

This it is that makes our places of worship to be solemn spots, even as Dr. Watts sings—

> "Up to her courts with joys unknown
> The holy tribes repair;
> The Son of David holds his throne,
> And sits in judgment there.
>
> "He hears our praises and complaints;
> And, while his awful voice
> Divides the sinners from the saints,
> We tremble and rejoice."

The Word of God is discriminating.

Once more, *the Word of God is marvellously revealing to the inner self.* It pierces between the joints and marrow, and marrow is a thing not to be got at very readily. The Word of God gets at the very marrow of our manhood; it lays bare the secret thoughts of the soul. It is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Have you not often, in hearing the Word, wondered how the preacher could so unveil that

which you had concealed? He says the very things in the pulpit which you had uttered in your bed-chamber. Yes, that is one of the marks of the Word of God that it lays bare a man's inmost secrets; yea, it discovers to him that which he had not even himself perceived. The Christ that is in the Word sees everything. Read the next verse—"All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

The Word not only lets you see what your thoughts are, but it criticizes your thoughts. The Word of God says of this thought, "it is vain," and of that thought, "it is acceptable"; of this thought, "it is selfish," and of that thought, "it is Christ-like." It is a judge of the thoughts of men. And the Word of God is such a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart that when men twist about, and wind, and wander, yet it tracks them. There is nothing so difficult to get at as a man. You may hunt a badger, and run down a fox, but you cannot get at a man—he has so many doublings and hiding-places: yet the Word of God will dig him out, and seize on him. When the Spirit of God works with the gospel, the man may dodge, and twist, but the preaching goes to his heart and conscience, and he is made to feel it, and to yield to its force.

Many times, I do not doubt, dear brothers, you have found comfort in the discerning power of the Word. Unkind lips have found great fault with you; you have been trying to do what you could for the Lord, and an enemy has slandered you, and then it has been a delight to remember that the Master discerns your motive. Holy Scripture has made you sure of this by the way in which it understood and commended you. He discerns the true object of your heart, and never misinterprets you; and this has inspired you with a firm resolve to be the faithful servant of so just a Lord. No slander will survive the judgment-seat of Christ. We are not to be tried by the opinions of men, but by the impartial Word of the Lord; and, therefore, we rest in peace.

II. I have been all this while over the first part of the discourse. I have only a minute or two just to show ONE OR TWO LESSONS WE OUGHT TO GATHER FROM THE QUALITIES OF THE WORD OF GOD that I have described.

The first is this. Brothers and sisters, *let us greatly reverence the Word of God.* If it be all this, let us read it, study it, prize it, and make it the man of our right hand. And you that are not converted, I do pray you treat the Bible with a holy love and reverence, and read it with the view of finding Christ and his salvation in it. Augustine used to say that the Scriptures are the swaddling-bands of the child Christ Jesus: while you are unrolling the bands I trust you will meet with him.

Next, dear friends, let us, *whenever we feel ourselves dead, and especially in prayer, get close to the Word, for the Word of God is alive.* I do not find that gracious men always pray alike. Who could? When you have nothing to say to your God, let him say something to you. The best private devotion is made up, half of searching Scripture in which God speaks to us, and the other half of prayer and praise, in which we speak to God. When thou art dead, turn from thy death to that Word which still lives.

Next, *whenever we feel weak in our duties, let us go to the Word of*

God, and the Christ in the Word, for power; and this will be the best of power. The power of our natural abilities, the power of our acquired knowledge, the power of our gathered experience, all these may be vanity, but the power which is in the Word will prove effectual. Get thou up from the cistern of thy failing strength to the fountain of omnipotence; for they that drink here, while the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, shall run, and not be weary, and shall walk, and not faint.

Next, *if you need as a minister, or a worker, anything that will cut your hearers to the heart, go to this Book for it.* I say this because I have known preachers try to use very cutting words of their own. God save us from that! When our hearts grow hot and our words are apt to be sharp as a razor, let us remember that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Let us not attempt to carry on Christ's war with the weapons of Satan. There is nothing so cutting as the Word of God. Keep to that. I believe also that one of the best ways of convincing men of error is not so much to denounce the error as to proclaim the truth more clearly. If a stick is very crooked, and you wish to prove that it is so, get a straight one, and quietly lay it down by its side, and when men look they will surely see the difference. The Word of God has a very keen edge about it, and all the cutting words you want you had better borrow therefrom.

And next, the Word of God is very piercing. When we cannot get at people by God's truth, we cannot get at them at all. I have heard ot preachers who have thought they ought to adapt themselves a little to certain people, and leave out portions of the truth which might be disagreeable. Brothers, if the Word of God will not pierce, our words will not, you may depend upon *that.* The Word of God is like the sword of Goliath, which had been laid up in the sanctuary, of which David said "There is none like it, give it me." Why did he like it so well? I think he liked it all the better because it had been laid up in the Holy Place by the priests; that is one thing. But I think he liked it best of all because it had stains of blood upon it—the blood of Goliath. I like my own sword because it is covered with blood right up to the hilt: the blood of slaughtered sins, and errors, and prejudices has made it like the sword of Don Rodrigo, "of a dark and purple tint." The slain of the Lord have been many by the old gospel. We point to many vanquished by this true Jerusalem blade. They desire me to use a new one. I have not tried it. What have I to do with a weapon which has seen no service? I have proved the Sword of the Lord, and of Gideon, and I mean to keep to it. My dear comrades in arms, gird this sword about you, and disdain the wooden weapons with which enemies would delude you! Let us use this blade of steel, well tempered in the fire, against the most obstinate, for they cannot stand against it. They may resist it for a time, but they will have to yield. They had better make preparations for surrender; for if the Lord comes out against them with his own Word, they will have to give in, and cry to him for mercy.

Next, if we want to discriminate at any time between the soul and the spirit, and the joints and marrow, *let us go to the Word of God for discrimination.* We need to use the Word of God just now upon several subjects. There is that matter of holiness, upon which one saith one

thing, and another another. Never mind what they all say, go to the Book, for this is the umpire on all questions. Amidst the controversies of the day about a thousand subjects, keep to this infallible Book, and it will guide you unerringly.

And lastly, since this Book is meant to be a discerner or critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart, *let the Book criticize us.* When you have issued a new volume from the press—which you do every day, for every day is a new treatise from the press of life—take it to this great critic, and let the Word of God judge it. If the Word of God approves you, you are approved; if the Word of God disapproves you, you are disapproved. Have friends praised you? They may be your enemies in so doing. Have other observers abused you? They may be wrong or right, let the Book decide. A man of one Book—if that Book is the Bible—is a *man,* for he is a man of God. Cling you to the living Word, and let the gospel of your fathers, let the gospel of the martyrs, let the gospel of the Reformers, let the gospel of the blood-washed multitude before the throne of God, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, be your gospel, and none but *that,* and it will save you and make you the means of saving others to the praise of God.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxix. 105—120.

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ABRAM'S CALL; OR, HALF-WAY AND ALL THE WAY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 26TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there."—Genesis xi. 31.

"And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."—Genesis xii. 5.

AFTER the flood, when men began to multiply and increase in the earth, it was not very long before they began to turn aside from the living and true God. At first the sons of Noah walked in the light of divine knowledge, though even among them was found an evil seed. When scattered over the earth after the confusion of tongues at Babel, the earth's hoar fathers carried with them a measure of the knowledge of God which they had received from their sires; but after a while, the light grew dim, men began to worship the sun and the moon, and they adored fire as the mystic symbol of the mysterious and spiritual Lord. They sought out many inventions; and having once begun to quit their allegiance to the one God, they very rapidly travelled along the down-grade till they worshipped strange gods. It was sad that although the earth produced its mighty hunters, and men built city after city, yet few among them sought after God, or builded altars to his name. Well might the Lord God cry out, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

A long period passed without a voice from God. Man seemed left to himself, and in danger of being given up to idols. The nations wandered each a different way, but all the downward road. Yet grace had not ended its reign; and therefore, before the lamp of God had wholly gone out, the Lord determined to reveal himself, and establish his worship in the world. He would select a family to be his peculiar servants; he would manifest himself to the father of that family, and would make with him a covenant. He would reveal to him the great things which he intended to do in the fulness of time,

and he would bid him hand down the revelation to his children from generation to generation. This family should grow into a nation, and to that nation should be committed the oracles of God. Out of that nation should come prophets, and priests, and heroes, who should believe in God and maintain the true faith against all comers, even until the Son of God himself should come to manifest the glory of God in a pre-eminent degree. In the midst of that nation the Lord resolved to set up ordinances, and a settled organization, by which truth should be taught through type and symbol, and by the hallowed speech of godly men. This, in his wisdom, he judged to be best for the future of the race.

In the wise sovereignty of his choice, the Lord chose Abram and his house. He giveth no account of his matters, and we cannot, therefore, tell why he took out of Ur of the Chaldees those of whom Joshua says, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." The Lord called Abram alone, and blessed him. He set apart the patriarch and his seed, and put them in trust with the priceless treasure of divine revelation: this they kept for themselves and for the rest of mankind.

It was needful that the elect family should be led apart and kept from the contamination of surrounding evil. Abram must come out from Ur of the Chaldees, and all its associations of idolatry, and he must even leave his kindred and his father's house, and walk before the Lord in separation unto prompt obedience and complete consecration. Thus in his separation unto God would be fulfilled the gracious purpose of the Most High. The Lord's end and aim was to keep his truth alive in the world by means of a people who should be set apart for that service; and it was therefore essential that the person chosen to be the head of that family, the founder of that nation, should come right away from all connection with the corrupt world, and walk apart with God. The chosen nation was to dwell alone, and not to be numbered among the peoples. Hence came that call which said to Abram, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing."

At this moment God is working in much the same manner in the midst of the world by his church. A church is an assembly called out. An *ecclesia* is not any and every "assembly": a mixed crowd of unauthorized persons, having no special right to come together would not be an ecclesia, or church. In a real ecclesia the herald summoned the citizens and burgesses by trumpet or by name, and it consisted of certain persons called out from among the common multitude. The true church consists of men who are called, and faithful, and chosen. They are redeemed from among men, and called out from among their fellows by effectual grace. God the Holy Spirit continues to call out, and bring to the Lord Jesus, those who are chosen of God according to the good pleasure of his will. Practically, conversion is the result of the call—"Get thee out from thy country." It is a repetition of that searching word, "Come ye out from

among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." The church is a repetition of the camp of Abram in the midst of Canaan. It is the Lord's portion among men, and it keeps his oracles. The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth; and it is the design of God to find a home for his gospel in his church, till the dispensation of grace shall close, and the Judge shall ascend the throne.

In gathering instruction from the call and outcoming of Abram, I shall handle the matter by making three remarks. First, *this call is often only half obeyed.* In our first text we find the command of God very partially carried out. Secondly, *this call is of a very special character*, and I shall endeavour to show the manner in which it comes to us at this time. Thirdly, *this call, when it is really obeyed, puts the obedient upon a special footing:* they are henceforth peculiarly the Lord's. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation!

I. In the first place, THIS CALL IS OFTEN ONLY HALF OBEYED. It came to Abram when he dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees; but though he so far hearkened to it as to set out for Canaan, yet we read that "they came to Haran, and dwelt there."

We do not know *how* the call came to Abram, whether by a voice which he heard with his ears, or by a mysterious impulse upon his mind, or by a dream or vision; but Stephen tells us, in the seventh of Acts—"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham." There may have been given to Abram some such sight of the glory of God as Job had when he cried, "Now mine eye seeth thee." The Lord appeared to Abram, and made him to understand that he must emigrate from his country, and quit his tribe. Somehow or other, it was laid home to Abram's heart and conscience that he must go forth upon a journey he knew not whither; he must journey into another land, and no more dwell in city, or town, or village, but become a sojourner with his God, a tent-dweller, a stranger in a strange land.

His first step would naturally be to tell his friends that he must needs leave them, for the living God had called him to go to the land of Canaan. At once his difficulties began. His kindred could not bear to part with him. If they had distinctly opposed him, and said, "It is absurd; your talk is insanity; yet if you must be gone, go your way and welcome;" then he would have gone in sadness, but assuredly he would not have hesitated. A man possessed of Abram's wondrous faith would have torn himself away with great firmness, although with deep regret at the sorrow which he caused. Had they opposed him, his course would have been plain.

But he had to meet with a much more insidious evil. His friends consented to his zeal. Whether they agreed in his reverence for Jehovah or not, they felt that they could not cut themselves off from Abram, and therefore they resolved to go with him. The word to Abram was express, "Get thee out from thy kindred, and from thy father's house"; but how was this to be done when his kindred and his father's house clung to him, and yielded to him? Very naturally his loving spirit could see no other way but to bid them all come with him, and yield themselves to God. Possibly Abram looked for great things from this, and rejoiced in it. It would seem as if his aged

father Terah, with that wisdom which is a near approach to subtlety, himself led the way in the migration; for we read—"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan." The father of the clan leads the way, and it is rather his migration than that of Abram. What was Abram to do? Instead of meeting opposition from his family, his own father is leading the way in the journey to Canaan. Did not this make his obedience easier? We shall see. Was not this happy union of the household, this undivided assent to the Lord's bidding, a great cause for rejoicing? It certainly appeared so; but all is not gold that glitters. What we think will help may at length hinder. What looks like a work of grace may turn out to be only the movements of unrenewed nature. Like the mixed multitude which came out of Egypt with Israel, we may have about us professed friends who may become our worst foes, in the secret of God's truth and grace.

In Abram's case the dreaded separation is spared: they start together for Canaan. So far so good; at least, it looks so. The travelling is wearisome, and many are the murmurings. The huge caravan has not gone very far before the proposal is made that they should be satisfied with the move which they had made, and remain at Haran. True, it was not Canaan, but it might do as well. Did not the family reason, "We shall stay here. We have yielded a great many points to Abram in coming away from Ur. But we cannot yield to all his demands. We have proved our love to him and our reverence for the Lord, by coming thus far, and now we ask for a fair compromise. Abram is very sincere, but he must not be bigoted. Surely he will not be so foolish as to believe in verbal inspiration, and insist upon Canaan, when Haran quite meets the spirit of the command. There is no doubt that Haran answers every purpose, and we mean to stay here, and Abram must stay with us." His father pleads that he is very old. To be moving continually is hard for aged people; and there is that broad Euphrates, how can the old man cross that dreaded flood? "Spare your venerable parent this last bitterness: I have come thus far to please you; do not press me further." I think I am not wildly imagining if I suppose that some such pleas induced the patriarch to tarry with his kindred at Haran. A loving and tender heart wrought against prompt literal obedience, and for a while the man of faith delayed, the heir of the promises hesitated. Do you blame him? It will be wiser to look at home. Holy Scripture describes his conduct, and appends no absolute word of censure; but it does what is quite as significant, it keeps silence as to anything like a record of blessing, or of communion with God, while Abram was at the half-way house at Haran. To a friend of God his silence is quite enough rebuke. If my friend does not smile, I do not require him to frown to let me know whereabouts I am in his esteem. If my friend no longer speaks to me, I do not need him to upbraid me, his silence is sadly eloquent to my heart.

Abram and the rest settled down at Haran. He was conquered, not by open foes, but by compromising friends. My brethren, take ye

good heed unto yourselves, that ye suffer not your feet to be entangled by the men of your own household. He that would follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, must not know his own kindred when he comes to the parting of the ways. Honest wolves will not harm us one half so much as those who look like sheep, but inwardly are not so. Our first father, Adam, fell by the temptation of her whom he loved, and the old serpent still knows how to seduce through our affections and lead into ruin by the suggestion of friendship. O man of God, beware! Read my parable with open eye, and practise the lesson thereof.

Let me describe the consequences of tarrying at any half-way house. *To obey the Lord partially is to disobey him.* If the Lord bids Abram go to Canaan, he cannot fulfil that command by going to Haran. Haran was not mentioned in the call. You cannot keep God's command by doing something else which pleases you better. The essence of obedience lies in its exactness. Although something else may seem to you to be quite as good as the thing commanded, what has that to do with it? *This* is what God bids you, and to refuse the thing commanded, professing to substitute a better thing, is gross presumption. You may not think it so, but so it is, that half obedience is whole disobedience. We can only obey the Lord's command as it stands; to alter it is as great a treason as to make erasures in a king's statute-book. It is will-worship, and not God's worship, if I do what I choose of the Lord's work, and leave a part undone which does not please me quite so well.

Moreover, *half-way obedience increases our responsibility*, because it is a plain confession that we know the Lord's will, though we do it not. Abram had received the call, and knew that he had done so, else why had he come to Haran? He admitted, by going as far as Haran, that he ought to go the whole way to Canaan; and so, by his own action he left himself without excuse. And any of you who are doing in a measure what is right because of the fear of God, and yet are acting in other matters contrary to what you know to be the Lord's will, you are left without apology for such neglect. By the service which you do render to God you admit that he has right to your obedience; why, then, do you not obey him in all things? You call Jesus your Lord, and do some of the things which he says, but why not the rest? Is it not clear that you know your Master's will and do it not? Thus, you see, there was failure in obedience, and increase of responsibility.

The result of this to Abram was the absence of privilege. God spoke not to his servant in Haran: neither dream, nor vision, nor voice came to him in the place of hesitancy. The Lord loved him, but hid his face from him, and denied him the visits of his grace. If we walk contrary to the Lord, he will walk contrary to us. Abram lived with his father Terah; but he was not living near his heavenly Father, and therefore he did not hear his voice. How greatly the true heart dreads this! How earnestly it sighs, "O Lord, be not silent to me, lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit"! O my brothers, let us not, by wavering and half-heartedness, lose our communion with the Lord our God.

Meanwhile, *Abram was rendering an affliction needful.* His father

Terah must die that the cord which held Abram might be broken. If the called one will not come out while the old man lives, death must do his work, and remove the cause of disobedience. If Abram fears to weep at parting with a living father, he must weep over his grave. One way or another the Lord will cause his chosen to obey him. Oh, that we would be tender of heart, and not be as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding! Whips and rods would seldom be heard of if we were more promptly obedient.

While tarrying at Haran, *Abram was creating cause of future disquietude* by his attachment to Lot. He was told to come out from his kindred, but he clung to his orphan nephew, and must needs accept his company. Lot caused him a great deal of trouble. His herdsmen created discontent and strife, and afterwards Lot, himself, was carried away captive, and peaceful Abram was compelled to gird on the warrior's sword, and go forth to battle, to rescue his nephew. Had Abram acted decidedly from the very first, he might have saved himself many a disquietude. My brethren, learn well these lessons. I merely hint them; will you not enlarge upon them?

All this while *Abram was delaying the great blessing which God was prepared to give him.* He was keeping out of the promised land, and away from the place where Jehovah would manifest himself to him, and enter into covenant with him. I fear that some true believers are depriving themselves of the richest joy and the most heavenly experience by their undecided conduct. Some of you have come away from your old sins, but you have not yet entered upon the new life in its fulness. You have left Ur of the Chaldees—the place of open sin; but you have not come to Canaan the holy. You are tarrying in the Haran of a partial obedience, which is neither here nor there—a sort of death in life, rebellion in obedience, unbelief in faith. I know many professors who have left their vicious habits, but they are not yet consecrated to the Lord Jesus: they are not absolutely in the world, and yet they are not abiding in the Lord. Their speech is half of Ashdod and half of the Jews' language; they dare not be Philistines, and yet they will not be Israelites. They are willing to be saved by the cross of Christ, but they are not willing to take up Christ's cross, and come right out decidedly upon his side at all times. This is a perilous state to be in. They have enough religion to make them miserable, but I fear not enough to fit them for joys eternal. They may ultimately get into heaven by the skin of their teeth; at least, I hope so; but they have no present joy, no immediate peace, no conscious fellowship with God. Half-way house godliness is wretched stuff: beware of it! Remember what we read of the mongrels who dwelt in Israel's land, who had been brought there by the Assyrian conqueror. They feared the Lord, and served other gods, and, therefore, Jehovah sent lions among them. Let all who are of that race remember the lions; for the Lord will not suffer such double-minded ones to live in peace before him.

Thus much, then, upon my first point: the divine call is too often only half obeyed.

II. Secondly, THIS CALL, ESPECIALLY AS IT COMES TO US, IS OF A VERY PECULIAR CHARACTER.

To us, of course, it is wholly *spiritual*. We are not called to-day to leave our country and our kindred, so far as our residence is concerned; but it seems to me that we are called to a much more difficult position than that, namely, to stay on the old spot, among old friends, and yet to lead a wholly new life. Of course, we are to quit all evil company; but we are not to leave the society of our fellow-men, nor to go out of the world. Even Abram was not called to be an ascetic, nor to live in a cave, nor to retire into the desert like a hermit. Within the borders of his own encampment Abram was a man among men, and pursued his daily calling as the keeper of great flocks of sheep, and herds of oxen, and camels, and so forth. Towards his neighbours he behaved himself with noble-minded independence and integrity. He was a pattern of what grace can make of a really noble man when he moves among those who are strangers to his God. But yet, beloved, Abram did, to a great extent, dwell in a favourable condition. He lived apart from the grosser sort; he was not wearied with the voices of a city, as Lot was: his own tents, and the many tents of his servants, made up quite a settlement, where God's name was reverenced, and the fear of the Lord was felt. That canvas town had one over it of whom the Lord said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Some of us can almost seclude our families, but many others have a far harder task; they have to live in the city amid its sins, and yet not to be of it; they have in their earthly callings to come into daily contact with the ungodly, and yet they have to be holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. As Abram was no Canaanite, though he sojourned in Canaan, so are we to prove ourselves to be of a totally distinct race. This is a very difficult piece of business. How great a wonder was asked by our Saviour's prayer—"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil"! Not by difference in brogue, nor by peculiarity in dress, are we to be marked out as the servants of God; but our lives must be so Christlike and pure, that men shall say of us, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, for thy life betrayeth thee." This call, then, is of a deeply spiritual and peculiar character. My brother, have you heard it? My sister, have you heard it? Have you endeavoured to obey it to the full? It means just this—that we are to flee all sin, without exception, and follow after everything that is pure and holy, without exception. Others wallow in what they call the pleasures of sin: abhor such things, and protest against them. Shun, also, everything that is doubtful; for, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If you are not sure it is right, it is sin to you. Avoid the appearance of evil. Separate yourself from all that which Christ would have disapproved. Be so decided, also, as to leave everything that is hesitating. Be out-and-out for Jesus. While many will try to run both with the hare and the hounds, make it your object to abhor that which is evil and to cleave to that which is good. Make a point of wearing your regimentals. Be dead and buried to this present evil world with its frivolities, philosophies, and grandeurs. Regard the world as crucified to you, and be yourself crucified to it. The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Go

without the camp bearing Christ's reproach. In matters of religion follow the Lord fully, let the Word of God be your sole and sure rule, and nothing else. That religion which is not according to God's Word is a false religion. Accept neither doctrine nor ceremony for which there is no scriptural warrant. Search thou the Word about it all: "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Follow thou thy conscience, as thy conscience is enlightened by the Spirit of God concerning his Word; follow the Word even in its jots and tittles. Make not too much of peculiarities in comparison with vital and fundamental truths; but, still, even with these less weighty matters, take heed that thou do not trifle, lest in neglecting the less thou learn to neglect the greater, and so become guilty of the great transgression. Avoid the world's religion; for if there is one world worse than another, it is the Christian world. No enemies of Israel were so bitter as their brethren the Edomites: brethren in name only become the fiercest of foes. Be thou distinctly removed from the religion which is based upon self-will, pride of intellect, and worldly conformity. The world's religion is as evil as the world's irreligion. Surrender to the plain teaching of the Spirit of God, and resolve in all things to follow thy Lord wherever he may lead thee. Stand thou alone, if others will not obey. In thine house let there be an altar for God, if there be not another in the land. Make thou a covenant with God through the one great Sacrifice, even if all others forget the Saviour.

See, dear friends, what the call is, and then remember that *it comes to the believer from God himself.* The Lord calls his servants unto the separated life, and because of his authority they are bound to obey. He calls by his Word, either preached or read: it comes to the individual by an application of the Spirit of God, so that the man yields cheerful assent thereto. He is drawn, and therefore he runs. Such a person feels it a pleasure to take Christ for his example, and to put his feet down in the very tracks of the Lord Jesus. It is ours to follow the Lord's precept and example with great care and solemn determination, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. It was so with Abram: is it so with you?

Because this call comes from God, *it has for us a supreme authority.* We follow our Lord even when darkness is round about him: though we know not the way, we know the Lord, and therefore we follow him implicitly. To us the Word of God is more than the decrees of emperors, or the statutes of senators. If this thing were of men, if this thing were ordained by a learned council, or a reverend bench, it would be of small account in our eyes; but when he that made us and redeemed us speaks to us, we can only reply, "Help thy servants to do thy will: for thy will is our delight."

My brethren, if we thus separate ourselves unto obedience, *we must expect violent opposition.* Severe criticism will not be spared us. Of course, some will say, "The man is mad": others more gently will murmur, "He is sadly misled." Many will accuse you of a liking to be singular, or a weakness for going to extremes, or a self-righteous wish to excel others, or of having "a bee in your bonnet." Accusers

will hint that you are seeking your own in some form or other; and if they cannot quite see a motive, they will imagine one. What is the use of imagination if it will not help a man out when his facts run short? Having once made up their mind that you are foolish and contemptible, they will view all your conduct through coloured glasses, and condemn you up and down. Be not dismayed, but endure hardness for the love of Jesus.

To go forth and lead a separated life *will need faith*, and to have faith you will need the grace of God. Believe that God's command is right, and believe that he will justify you in fulfilling it. Believe that God's promise is true, and that he will prove it so. Abram was bidden to go, and he went. Look at Abram's case, and see how impossible it was for him to obey apart from faith in God. He was to go away from all that was dear, from all that was comfortable and settled; he was to go he knew not whither, and he was to go to obtain an inheritance for a son that was not born, and that was not likely ever to be born; for he was old, and Sarai was well stricken in years. Only faith could enable him to obey a call which looked so like a delusion. We need faith in every step of a holy life. Oh for more looking unto Jesus, more child-like dependence upon God! If thou believest, thou wilt do the Lord's will; but if thou dost not believe, thou wilt refuse to obey, and miss the blessing.

Suppose we do obey the divine call, what then? Will our course be smooth ever afterwards? Far from it. The walk of the separated believer *involves trial.* The trial of Abram in leaving his country was but one out of ten which are recorded. It is written, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." In the Lord's vineyard the knife is used if nowhere else. The Lord tried Abram, and he will try us: it is a part of the process of love by which he prepares us for the eternal rest. The course of true faith never does run smooth. If thou wilt obey the divine call thou shalt be favoured with more trials, thou shalt be honoured with still greater tests of thy fidelity; but then thou shalt be known as the friend of God, and God shall make thee to be a blessing to others even to the end of time. Mark well what is proposed to you—that God shall take you, and give you his light, and his truth, and his salvation, that you may preserve it for all the ages, until Christ shall come. Are you willing to accept so high an honour? Will you count the cost, and make your calling and election sure? Will you cry with Esaias, "Here am I! Send me"? As the Roman consul devoted himself to death in battle for the sake of the beloved city, will you devote yourself to God, and his cause, and truth? In very deed such is my spirit. I wish there were ten thousand who would say the same. O my brother, blessed art thou among men, if thou art set apart for God and truth. Yea, my sister, blessed art thou among women, if thou art following the Lord fully in the way of his will.

III. This brings me to my third and last point. THIS CALL, WHEN IT IS OBEYED, PUTS US ON SPECIAL GROUND.

For, first, *God is bound to justify the course which he himself commands.* When Abram went to Canaan at the Lord's bidding and remained there, the responsibility was with the Lord. If any evil had

come of his conduct he could not have blamed himself. It was neither his own wisdom nor his own folly which led him: God alone was his director. It is mine to obey, it is God's to prove that my obedience is wise. What peace this brings! O my hearer, if thou believest in Christ with all thy heart, and if thou becomest a sincere follower of Jesus in all things, God will justify thee in so doing, for thou doest it at his bidding. If there be any folly in holiness, the folly is not with thee, but with him that bade thee be holy. The servant is accountable for any action he does of his own head, but not for that which he does by the command of his principal. So you, in keeping close to God's will, are not accountable for consequences; the consequences must lie with God. As surely as wisdom is justified of her children, so is God justified of all believers; ay, and he justifieth believers, and their faith is counted unto them for righteousness. Therefore, beloved, we stand on the ground of justification when we obey the call of God.

We cease, also, from that moment to be of the world. God deals with the world one way, but with his separated ones in another way. "Them that are without, God judgeth"; but those who are within are not under law, but under grace. It is the joy of faith that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. There is discipline now within the house of God; but it is not that of a court of justice, but of the abode of love. The Lord chastens his children, that they may not be condemned with the world. The separated ones are not numbered among the people of the earth. When you read of the seven trumpets, and vials, and plagues, fear not, for nothing shall by any means hurt you. When the blood shall flow in the day of vengeance up to the horses' bridles, then shall not a hair of your head perish, for the Lord secures those who are sealed to him. Babylon must fall, that lieth hard by Ur of the Chaldees, whence you came; and all that bear the mark of the beast shall die, even as Terah died in Haran; but as for you, "at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh." No evil shall touch you, for the Lord is your keeper. If you are walking in the separated path with God, and are setting him always before you, you shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. What a condition to be in! First justified, and then secured from the doom which will surely fall upon the guilty world.

Now, as free grace has separated you unto God, *you come into an honoured fellowship with him.* Abram, in his tent, had God for his companion. He had near and clear manifestations of God; he entertained angels unawares, and with those angels was the Son of God himself. If you quit the world to abide with God, God himself will abide with you. If you come out from the unclean world, the Lord has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them. I will be a father unto them, and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." Oh, rest you in this sweet fact, that the Triune God will manifest himself to his chosen as he doth not to the world. You shall be one of the people near unto him.

By coming out from the world, and following the Lord closely, *we come under the divine care and protection.* How wonderfully Abram

was screened from evil! Jehovah was his shield. He was a stranger in the midst of enemies, but they did not molest him: an awe was upon them, for Jehovah had said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Wherever a true saint goes, the Lord lays his commands on all the powers of nature and all the angels of heaven to take care of him. When Abram was at peace God blessed him in all things; and if he went to war, God gave his enemies as driven stubble to his bow. If we are with God, God is with us. When God's will is our delight, God's providence is our inheritance. It is not so with you all: no, not even with all of you who profess to be Christians; but it is so with those of you who keep close to God's Word, and follow in will, in spirit, in belief, and in act, the example of his dear Son. O beloved, let us strive after this! Let us aim at perfect conformity to the will of God, for this will place us in quiet nearness to God.

Henceforth *Abram was for God's use only.* God treated him as his confidant, as the receiver of heavenly revelations, and as the founder of a race. God will also use us, if we will come where he can use us. Vessels set apart for the Master's use must not be used by the servants. God is a great King; and when he selects a cup for his own table, he will not have it used by others. If other lips drink out of the chalice of thy life, the Lord disdains thee. Thou must be for him only, or thou art not his spouse. If thou be his from the crown of thy head to the sole of thy foot by solemn consecration, he will honour thee yet more and more; yea, thou knowest not to what high ends he has ordained thee, both in this life and in the ages to come. But look thou well to this, that thou be holiness unto the Lord.

One more thought presses itself upon my heart: the man who for Christ's sake has cut all his moorings, and separated himself from the world, to follow the Lamb, has learned how to live, but he has also learned how to die. We die unto the world, and thereby learn to die. When we cease to trust in riches, when we resign our comforts, when we no longer lean on friends, when all things visible become as shadows to us, then we make a rehearsal of death. Unless the Lord himself shall soon descend from heaven with a shout, we shall all die. Yes, the hour of our departure hastens on. Then we shall have to cut ourselves loose from our moorings, be they what they may. Soon shall we hear this word from heaven, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." This will be our summons to the better Canaan, the land that floweth with milk and honey. We shall depart out of this world to face an unknown eternity; but we shall by no means dread the migration. He that has crossed the great river, the river Euphrates, will not fear the Jordan. To give up the world will be no new thing for you or for me: we have given it up many times already. We have frequently given up everything into the Lord's hands in real earnest, and we can readily do it once more. We live here as strangers and sojourners, and we find little to charm us in this foreign land. Our treasure is above, and it will be a joy for our souls to rise to the place where our hearts already dwell. We cannot be sorry to quit a dead world. Who loves to sit in a charnel-house? If we tremble to

leave kindred and friends, yet let us remember that we have already quitted them in spirit. Let us journey, as Abram did, towards the south; that is to say, let us get still further away from the old abode. Let us make for the heart of Immanuel's land. Let us press towards the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city, and rest not till we stand in our lot and behold him whom Abram saw with gladness.

The one question I finish with is:—Do you know anything about this? Have you ever felt this divine call? If so, make your calling and election sure. Carry out the separating ordinance to the full. Some of us had to take very decided steps at our first starting, but we began aright. We have been called since to equally painful courses, but we hope to keep right. Anything is better than a wound in the conscience. If we keep close to Christ, we shall find rest unto our souls. We look back without regret to what we may have suffered by decision; counting it less than nothing for the joy that was set before us. We wish that all our converts would be out-and-out in their course of life. O you who by grace are beginners in the heavenly life, make a strong resolve—"We will be the servants of God, and endeavour in all things to obey him." Since God made you, and by the blood of his dear Son redeemed you, it is yours to be doubly the Lord's. There are the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ; are these yours? Make sure on that point; and if they are yours, yield yourself to Jesus, and, from this day forward, do his bidding without question or delay. Quit everything contrary to the Lord's mind and will; at all cost be true: then shall the Lord, be your delight, and his service shall be your heaven below. If you are now separated unto him, you shall find your reward in that day when he shall divide the sheep from the goats, for then you shall be placed at his right hand, to hear him say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." May you be the children of believing Abram for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis xi. 27—32, xii. 1—5; Joshua xxiv. 1—3; Acts vii. 1—5; Hebrews xi. 8—11.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GRACE ABOUNDING OVER ABOUNDING SIN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 4TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."—Romans v. 20.

THE first sentence will serve as a preface; the second sentence will be the actual text.

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound." Man was a sinner before the law of Ten Commandments had been given. He was a sinner through the offence of his first father, Adam; and he was, also, practically a sinner by his own personal offence; for he rebelled against the light of nature, and the inner light of conscience. Men, from Adam downward, transgressed against that memory of better days which had been handed down from father to son, and had never been quite forgotten. Man everywhere, whether he knew anything about the law of Moses or not, was alienated from his God. The Word of God contains this truthful estimate of our race: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

The law was given, however, according to the text, "that the offence might abound." Such was the effect of the law. It did not hinder sin, nor provide a remedy for it; but its actual effect was that the offence abounded. How so?

It was so, first, because it revealed the offence. Men did not in every instance clearly discern what was sin; but when the law came, it pointed out to man that this evil, which he thought little of, was an abomination in the sight of God. Man's nature and character was like a dark dungeon which knew no ray of light. Yonder prisoner does not perceive the horrible filthiness and corruption of the place wherein he is immured, so long as he is in darkness. When a lamp is brought, or a window is opened and the light of day comes in, he finds out to his dismay the hideous condition of his den. He spies loathsome creatures upon the walls, and marks how others burrow out of sight because the light annoys them. He may, perhaps, have guessed that all was not as it should be, but he had not imagined the abundance of the evils. The light has entered, and the offence abounds. Law

does not make us sinful, but it displays our sinfulness. In the presence of the perfect standard we see our shortcomings. The law of God is the looking-glass in which a man sees the spots upon his face. It does not wash you—you cannot wash in a looking-glass; but it prompts you to seek the cleansing water. The design of the law is the revealing of our many offences, that, thereby, we may be driven out of self-righteousness to the Lord Jesus, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin.

The law causes the offence to abound by making an offender to stand without excuse. Before he knew the law perfectly, his sin was not so wilful. While he did but faintly know the commands, he could, as it were, but faintly break them; but as soon as he distinctly knows what is right, and what is wrong, then every cloak is taken away from him. Sin becomes exceeding sinful when it is committed against light and knowledge. Is it not so with some of you? Are you not forced to admit that you commit many sins in one, now that you have been made to know the law, and yet wilfully offend against it, by omission or commission? He who knows his Master's will and does it not, will be beaten with many stripes, because he is guilty of abounding offences. The law enters to strip us of every cloak of justification, and so to drive us to seek the robe of Christ's righteousness.

Next, I think the law makes the offence to abound by causing sin to be, more evidently, a presumptuous rebellion against the great Lawgiver. To sin in the front of Sinai, with its wonderful display of divine majesty, is to sin indeed. To rebel against a law promulgated with sound of trumpet, and thunders, and pomp of God, is to sin with a high hand and a defiant heart. When thou hast heard the Ten Commands, when thou knowest the law of the kingdom, when thy Maker's will is plainly set before thee, then to transgress is to transgress with an insolence of pride which will admit of no excuse.

Once more: the entrance of the law makes the offence to abound in this sense, that the rebellious will of man rises up in opposition to it. Because God commands, man refuses; and because he forbids, man desires. There are some men who might not have sinned in a particular direction if the commandment had not forbidden it. The light of the law, instead of being a warning to them to avoid evil, seems to point out to them the way in which they can most offend. Oh, how deep is the depravity of human nature! The law itself provokes it to rebel. Men long to enter, because trespassers are warned to keep away. Their minds are so at enmity against God, that they delight in that which is forbidden, not so much because they find any particular pleasure in the thing itself, but because it shows their independence and their freedom from the restraints of God. This vicious self-will is in all of us by nature; for the carnal mind is enmity against God; and therefore the law, though in itself holy and just and good, provokes us to do evil. We are like lime, and the law is as cold water, which is in itself of a cooling nature; yet, no sooner does the water of the law get at the lime of our nature, than a heat of sin is generated: thus, "the law entered, that the offence might abound."

Why, then, did God send the law? Is it not an evil thing that the offence should abound? In itself it may seem so to be; but God

dealeth with us as physicians sometimes deal with their patients. A disease, which will be fatal if it spends itself within the patient, must be brought to the surface: the physician therefore prescribes a medicine which displays the evil. The evil was all within, but it did not abound as to its visible effects; it is needful that it should do so, that it may be cured. The law is the medicine which throws out the depravity of man, makes him see it in his actions, and even provokes him to display it. The evil is in man, like rabbits in yonder brushwood: the law sets alight to the cover, and the hidden creatures are seen. The law stirs the mud at the bottom of the pool, and proves how foul the waters are. The law compels the man to see that sin dwelleth in him, and that it is a powerful tyrant over his nature. All this is with a view to his cure. God be thanked when the law so works as to take off the sinner from all confidence in himself! To make the leper confess that he is incurable is going a great way towards compelling him to go to that Divine Saviour, who alone is able to heal him. This is the object and end of the law towards men whom God will save.

Consider for a moment. You may take it as an axiom, a thing self-evident, that there can be no grace where there is no guilt: there can be no mercy where there is no sin. There can be justice, there can be benevolence; but there cannot be mercy unless there is criminality. If you are not a sinner God cannot have mercy upon you. If you have never sinned God cannot display pardoning grace towards you, for there is nothing to pardon. It were a misuse of words to talk of forgiving a man who has done no wrong, or to speak of bestowing undeserved favour upon a person who deserves reward. It would be an insult to innocence to offer it mercy. You must, therefore, have sin or you cannot have grace—that is clear.

Next, consider that there will be no seeking after grace where there is no sense of sin. We may preach till we are hoarse, but you good people, who have never broken the law, and are not guilty of anything wrong, will never care for our message of mercy. You are such kind people that, out of compliment to religion, you say, "Yes, we are sinners. We are all sinners." But you know in your heart of hearts you do not mean it. You will never ask for grace; for you have no sense of shame or guilt. None of you will seek mercy, till first you have pleaded guilty to the indictment which the law of God presents against you. Oh, that you felt your sins! Oh, that you knew your need of forgiveness! for then you would see yourselves to be in such a condition that only the free, rich, sovereign grace of God can save you.

Furthermore, I am sure that there will be no reception and acceptance of grace by any man, till there is a full confession of sin and a burdensome sense of its weight. Why should you receive grace when you do not want it? What is the use of it to you? Why should you bow your knee to God, and receive, as the free gift of his charity, that which you feel you deserve? Have you not already earned eternal life? Are you not as good as other people? Have you not some considerable claim upon God? Do I startle you with these plain questions? Have I not heard you say much the same?

The other day when we preached the electing love of God, you grumbled and muttered that God was unjust to choose one rather than another. What did this mean? Did it not mean that you felt you had some claim upon God? O sir, if this is your spirit, I must deal plainly with you! If you have any claim upon your Maker, plead it, and be you sure that he will not deny you your just rights. But I would advise you to change your method of dealing with your Judge: you will never prevail in this fashion. In truth, you have no claim upon him; but must appeal to his pure mercy. You are not in a position for him to display free grace to you till your mouth is shut, and you sit down in dust and ashes, silently owning that you deserve nothing at his hands but infinite displeasure. Confess that whatever he gives you that is good and gracious must be given freely to one who deserves nothing. Hell gapes at your feet: cease from pride, and humbly sue out a pardon.

You see, then, the use of the law: it is to bring you where grace can be fitly shown you. It shuts you up that you may cry to Jesus to set you free. It is a storm which wrecks your hopes of self-salvation, but washes you upon the Rock of Ages. The condemning sentence of the law is meant to prepare you for the absolution of the gospel. If you condemn yourself and plead guilty before God, the royal pardon can then be extended towards you. The self-condemned shall be forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus, and the sovereign grace of God. Oh, my hearer, you must sit down there in the dust, or else God will not look at you! You must yield yourself to him, owning his justice, honouring his law: this is the first condition of his mercy, and to this his grace brings all who feel its power. The Lord will have you bow before him in self-abhorrence, and confess his right to punish you. Remember, "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion," and he will have you know this, and agree to it. His grace must reign triumphantly, and you must kiss its silver sceptre.

Thus has the first sentence served us for a preface: God bless it to us!

I. The doctrine of the text itself is this, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"; and I shall try to bring out that truth, first, by saying that THIS IS SEEN IN THE WHOLE WORK OF GRACE, from beginning to end.

I would direct your attention to the context. The safest way to preach upon a text, is to follow out the idea which the inspired writer was endeavouring to convey. Paul has, in this place, been speaking of the abounding result for evil of one sin in the case of Adam, the federal head of the race. That one sin of Adam's abounded terribly. Look at the multitudinous generations of our race which have gone down to death. Who slew all these? Sin is the wolf which has devoured the flocks of men. Sin has poisoned the streams of manhood at their fountain-head, and everywhere they run with poisoned waters. Concerning this, Paul says, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

First, then, *sin abounded in its effect upon the whole human race:* one sin

overthrew all humanity; one fatal fault, the breach of a plain and easy law, made sinners of us all. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Simple as was the command which Adam broke, it involved obedience or disobedience to the sovereignty of God. All the trees of the garden were generously given to happy Adam in Paradise: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." There was but one tree reserved for God by the prohibition, "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam had no need to touch that fruit, there were all the other trees for him. Nothing was denied him which was really for his good; he was only forbidden that which would ruin him. We all look back to that Paradisaical state and wish we could have been put in some such a position as he: yet he dared to trespass on God's reserves, and thus to set himself up above his Maker. He judged it wise to do what God forbade: he ran the risk of death in the foolish hope of rising into a still higher state.

See the consequences of that sin on all sides, the world is full of them. Yet, saith Paul, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," and he gives us this as a proof of it: "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification" (Rom. v. 16). The Lord Jesus came into the world, not alone to put away Adam's sin, but all the sins which have followed upon it. The second Adam has repaired the desperate ruin of the first, and much more. By his death upon the cross, our Divine Substitute has put away those myriads of sins, which have been committed by men since the first offence in Eden. Think of this! Take the whole aggregate of believers, and let each one disburden his conscience of its load of sin. What a mountain! Pile it up! Pile it up! It rises huge as high Olympus! Age after age believers come and lay their enormous loads in this place. "The Lord hath made to meet on him the iniquities of us all." What Alps! What Himalayas of sin! If there were only mine and yours, my brother, what mountains of division would our sins make! But the great Christ, the free gift of God to us, when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, took all those countless sins away. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"! Here is infinite grace to pardon immeasurable sin! Truly the "one man's offence" abounded horribly; but the "one man's obedience," the obedience of the Son of God, hath superabounded. As the arch of heaven far exceedeth in its span the whole round globe of the earth, so doth grace much more abound over human sin.

Follow me further, when I notice, secondly, that *sin abounded in its ruinous effects*. It utterly destroyed humanity. In the third chapter of the Romans you see how, in every part of his nature, man is depraved by sin. Think of the havoc which the tyrant, sin, has made of our natural estate and heritage. Eden is withered—its very site is forgotten. Our restfulness among the trees of the field, freely yielding their fruit, is gone, and God hath said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." The field we till has lost its spontaneous yield of corn: "Thorns also and thistles shall it

bring forth to thee." Our life has lost its glory and immortality; for "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Every woman in her pangs of travail, every man in his weariness of labour, and all of us together in the griefs of death, see what sin has done for us as to our mortal bodies. Alas, it has gone deeper: it has ruined our souls. Sin has unmanned man. The crown and glory of his manhood it has thrown to the ground. All our faculties are out of gear; all our tendencies are perverted. Beloved, let us rejoice that the Lord Jesus Christ has come to redeem us from the curse of sin, and he will undo the evil of evil. Even this poor world he will deliver from the bondage of corruption; and he will create new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The groans and painful travail of the whole creation shall result in a full deliverance, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and somewhat more. As for ourselves, we are lifted up to a position far higher than that which we should have occupied had the race continued in its innocence. The Lord Jesus Christ found us in a horrible pit and in the miry clay, and he not only lifted us up out of it, but he set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings. Raised from hell, we are lifted not to the bowers of Eden, but to the throne of God. Redeemed human nature has greater capacities than unfallen human nature. To Adam the Lord did not say, "Thou art a son of God, joint heir with the Only-Begotten"; but he has said that to each believer redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. Beloved, such a thing as fellowship with Christ in his sufferings could not have been known to Adam in Paradise. He could not have known what it is to be dead, and to have his life hid with Christ in God. Blessed be his name, our Lord Jesus Christ can say, "I restored that which I took not away"! He restored more than ever was taken away from us; for he hath made us to be partakers of the divine nature, and in his own person he hath placed us at God's right hand in the heavenly places. Inasmuch as the dominion of the Lord Jesus is more glorious than that of unfallen Adam, manhood is now more great and glorious than before the Fall. Grace has so much more abounded, that in Jesus we have gained more than in Adam we lost. Our Paradise Regained is far more glorious than our Paradise Lost.

Again, *sin abounded to the dishonour of God.* I was trying the other day to put myself into the position of Satan at the gates of Eden, that I might understand his diabolical policy. He had become the arch-enemy of God, and when he saw this newly-made world, and perceived two perfectly pure and happy creatures placed in it, he looked on with envy, and plotted mischief. He heard the Creator say, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," and he hoped here to find an opportunity for an assault upon God. If he could induce those new-made creatures to eat of the forbidden fruit, he would place their Maker upon the horns of a dilemma: either he must destroy the creatures which he had made, or else he must be untrue. The Lord had said, "Ye shall surely die," and he must thus undo his own work, and destroy a creature which he had made in his own image, after his own likeness. Satan, probably, perceived that man was an extraordinary being, with a wonderful mystery of

glory hanging about his destiny; and, if he could make him sin, he would cause God to destroy him, and so far defeat the eternal purpose. On the other hand, if the Lord did not execute the sentence, then he would not be truthful, and throughout all his great universe it would be reported that the Lord's word had been broken. Either he had changed his mind, or he had spoken in jest, or he had been proven to have threatened too severe a penalty. In either case, the evil spirit hoped to triumph. It was a deep, far-reaching scheme to dim the splendour of the King of kings.

Beloved, did it not seem as if sin had abounded beyond measure, when first the woman and then the man had been deceived, and had done despite to God? Behold how grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ, did much more abound! God is more honoured in the redemption of man than if there had never been a Fall. The Lord has displayed the majesty of his justice, and the glory of his grace, in the great sacrifice of his dear Son, in such a manner that angels, and principalities, and powers will wonder throughout all ages. More of God is to be seen in the great work of redeeming love than could have been reflected in the creation of myriads of worlds, had each one of them been replete with marvels of divine skill, and goodness, and power. In Jesus crucified Jehovah is glorified as never before. Where sin abounded to the apparent dishonour of God, grace doth much more abound to the infinite glory of his ever-blessed name.

Again, *sin abounded by degrading human character.* What a wretched being man is, as a sinner against God! Unchecked by law, and allowed to do as he pleases, what will not man become? See how Paul describes men in these progressive times—in these enlightened centuries: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Human nature was not at all slandered by Whitefield when he said that, "left to himself, man is half beast and half devil." I do not mean merely men in savage countries, I am thinking of men in London. Only the other day a certain newspaper gave us plenty of proof of the sin of this city: I will say no more—could brutes or demons be worse? Read human history, Assyrian, Roman, Greek, Saracenic, Spanish, English; and if you are a lover of holiness, you will be sick of man. Has any other creature, except the fallen angels, ever become so cruel, so mean, so false? Behold what villains, what tyrants, what monsters sin has made!

But now look on the other side, and see what the grace of God has done. Under the moulding hand of the Holy Spirit a gracious man becomes the noblest work of God. Man, born again and rescued from the Fall, is now capable of virtues, to which he never could have reached before he sinned. An unfallen being could not hate sin with the intensity of abhorrence which is found in the renewed heart. We now know by personal experience the horror of sin, and

there is now within us an instinctive shuddering at it. An unfallen being could not exhibit patience, for it could not suffer, and patience has its perfect work to do. When I have read the stories of the martyrs in the first ages of the Christian church, and during the Marian persecution in England, I have adored the Lord, who could enable poor feeble men and women thus to prove their love to their God and Saviour. What great things they suffered out of love to God; and how grandly did they thus honour him! O God, what a noble being thy grace has made man to be! I have felt great reverence for sanctified humanity, when I have seen how men could sing God's praises in the fires. What noble deeds men have been capable of, when the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts! I do not think angels, or archangels, have ever been able to exhibit so admirable an all-round character as the grace of God hath wrought in once fallen men whom he has, by his grace, inspired with the divine life. In human character, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." I believe God looks out of heaven to-day, and sees in many of his poor, hidden people such beauties of virtue, such charms of holiness, that he himself is delighted with them. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him." These are such true jewels that the Lord has a high estimate of them, and sets them apart for himself: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

Again, dear friends, *sin abounded to the causing of great sorrow.* It brought with it a long train of woes. The children of sin are many, and each one causeth lamentation. We cannot attempt to fathom the dark abysses of sorrow which have opened in this world since the advent of sin. Is it not a place of tears—yea, a field of blood? Yet by a wonderful alchemy, through the existence of sin, grace has produced a new joy, yea, more than one new joy. The calm, deep joy of repentance must have been unknown to perfect innocence. This right orient pearl is not found in the rivers of Eden. Yea, and that joy which is in heaven in the presence of the angels of God over sinners that repent is a new thing, whose birth is since the Fall. God himself knows a joy which he could not have known had there been no sin. Behold, with tearful wonder, the great Father as he receives his returning prodigal, and cries to all about him, "Let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." O brethren, how could almighty love have been victorious in grace had there been no sin to battle with? Heaven is the more heaven for us, since there we shall sing of robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb. God hath greater joy in man, and man hath greater joy in God, because grace abounded over sin. We are getting into deep waters now! How true our text is!

Once more, *sin abounded to hinder the reign of Christ.* I believe that Satan's design in leading men into sin at the first, was to prevent the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ as man and God in one person. I do not lay it down as a doctrine, specifically taught in Scripture, but still it seems to me a probable truth, that Satan foresaw that the gap which was made in heaven by the fall of the angels was to be filled up by human beings, whom God would place near his throne. Satan

thought that he saw before him the beings who would take the places of the fallen spirits, and he envied them. He knew that they were made in the image of the Only-Begotten, the Christ of God, and he hated him because he saw united in his person God whom he abhorred, and man whom he envied. Satan shot at the second Adam through the breast of the first Adam. He meant to overthrow the Coming One; but, fool that he was, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, is now exalted higher than ever we could conceive him to have been, had there been no sin to bear, no redemption to work out. Jesus, wounded and slain, has about him higher splendour than before. O King of kings and Lord of lords, Man of Sorrows, we sing hallelujahs unto thee! All our hearts beat true to thee! We love thee beyond all else! Thou art he whom we will praise for ever and ever! Jesus sits on no precarious throne in the empire of love. We would each one maintain his right with the last pulse of our hearts. King of kings and Lord of lords! Hallelujah! Where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded to the glory of the Only-Begotten Son of God.

II. I find time always flies fastest when our subject is most precious. I have a second head, which deserves a lengthened consideration; but we must be content with mere hints. This great fact, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, crops up everywhere. THIS IS TO BE SEEN IN SPECIAL CASES.

The first special case is *the introduction of the law*. When the law of Ten Commands was given, through man's sin, it ministered to the abounding of the offence; but it also ministered to the aboundings of grace. It is true there were ten commands; but there was more than tenfold grace. With the law there came forward a High Priest. The world had never seen a High Priest before, arrayed in jewelled breastplate, and garments of glory and beauty. There was the law; but at the same time there was the holy place of the Tabernacle of the Most High with its altar, its laver, its candlestick, and its table of shew-bread. There was, also, the secret shrine where the majesty of God dwelt. God had, by those symbols and types, come to dwell among men. It is true, sin abounded through the law; but, then, sacrifices for sin also abounded. Heretofore, there had been no morning and evening lambs; there had been no day of atonement; no sprinkling of blood; no benediction from the Lord's High Priest For every sin that the law revealed, a sacrifice was provided. Sins of ignorance, sins of their holy things, sins of all sorts were met by special sacrifices; so that the sins uncovered to the conscience, were also covered by the sacrifice.

The story of Israel is another case in point. How often the nation rebelled; but how often did mercy rejoice over judgment! Truly the history of the chosen people shows how sin abounded, and grace did much more abound.

Run your eye down history and pause at *the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus*. This is the highest peak of the mountains of sin. They crucified the Lord of glory. Here sin abounded. But do I need to tell you that grace did here much more abound? You can look at the death of Christ till Pilate vanishes, and Caiaphas fades away,

and all the clamour of the priests and Jews is hushed, and you see nothing and hear nothing but free grace and dying love.

There followed upon the crucifixion of our Lord, *the casting away of the Jewish people for a while.* Sin abounded when the Lord thus came to his own and his own received him not. Yes; but the casting away of them was the saving of the nations. "We turn to the Gentiles," said the apostle; and that was a blessed turning for you and for me. Was it not? They that were bidden to the feast were not worthy, and the master of the house, being angry, invited other guests. Mark, "being angry"! What did he do when he was angry? Why, he did the most gracious thing of all; he said, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and as many as ye shall find bid to the supper." Sin abounded, for Israel would not enter the feast of love; but grace did much more abound, for the heathen entered the kingdom.

The heathen world at that time was sunk in the blackest darkness, and sin abounded. You have only to study ancient history and you will fetch a heavy sigh to think that men could be so vile. A poor and unlettered people were chosen of God to receive the gospel of Jesus, and they went about telling of an atoning Saviour, in their own simple way, until the Roman empire was entirely changed. Light and peace and truth came into the world, and drove away slavery and tyranny and bestial lust. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. What wonderful characters were produced in the terrible reign of Diocletian! What consecration to God was seen in the confessors! What fearlessness in common Christians! What invincible loyalty to Christ in the martyrs! Out of barbarians the Lord made saints, and the degraded rose to holiness sublime.

If I were to ask you, now, to give the best illustrations of grace abounding in individuals, I think your impulse would be to choose *men in whom sin once abounded.* What characters do we preach of most, when we would magnify the grace of God? We talk of David, and Manasseh, and swearing Peter, and the dying thief, and Saul of Tarsus, and the woman that was a sinner. If we want to show where grace abounded, we naturally turn our eyes to the place where sin abounded. Is it not so? Therefore, I need not give you any more cases—it is proven that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

III. Lastly; and this is what I want to hold you to, dear friends, at this time: THIS HOLDS TRUE TO EACH ONE OF US.

Let me take the case of the *open sinner.* What have you been? Have you grossly sinned? Have you defiled your body with unhallowed passions? Have you been dishonest to your fellow-men? Does some scarlet sin stain your conscience, even as you sit in the pew? Have you grown hardened in sin by long perseverance in it? Are you conscious that you have frequently, wilfully, and resolutely sinned? Are you getting old, and have you been soaking these seventy years in the crimson dye of sin till you are saturated through and through with its colour? Have you even been an implacable opponent of the gospel? Have you persecuted the saints of God? Have you tried by argument to batter down the gospel, or by ridicule to put

it to reproach? Then hear this text: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"; and as it was in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be, till this world shall end. The grace of God, if thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, will triumph over the greatness of thy wickedness. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Throw down your weapons of rebellion; surrender at discretion; kiss the pierced hand of Jesus which is now held out to you, and this very moment you shall be forgiven, and you shall go your way a pardoned man, to begin a new life, and to bear witness that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Perhaps this does not touch you, my friend. Listen to my next word which is addressed to *the instructed sinner*. You are a person whose religious education has made you aware of the guilt of sin; you have read your Bible, and you have heard truthful preaching; and although you have never been a gross open sinner, yet you know that your life teems with sins of omission and commission. You know that you have sinned against light and knowledge. You have done despite to a tender conscience very often; and therefore you rightly judge that you are even a greater sinner than the more openly profane. Be it so; I take you at that. Do not run back from it. Let it be so; for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Oh, that you may be as much instructed in the remedy, as you are instructed in the disease! Oh, that you may have as clear a view of the righteousness of Christ, as you have of your own unrighteousness! Christ's work is a divine work, broad enough to cover all your iniquity, and to conquer all your sin. Believe this! Give glory to God by believing it; and according to your faith, so be it unto you.

I address another, who does not answer either of these two descriptions exactly; but he has lately begun to seek mercy, and the more he prays the more he is *tempted*. Horrible suggestions rush into his mind; damnable thoughts beset and bewilder him. Ah, my friend, I know what this means: the nearer you are to mercy, the nearer you seem to get to hell-gate! When you most solemnly mean to do good you feel another law in your members bringing you into captivity. You grow worse where you hoped you would have grown better. Very well, then; grip my text firmly as for your life: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." If a whole legion of devils should be let loose upon you, Christ will glorify himself by mastering them all. If now you cannot repent, nor pray, nor do anything, remember that text, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Look over the heads of all these doubts, and devils, and inabilities, and see Jesus lifted on the cross, like the brazen serpent upon the pole; and look thou to him, and the fiery serpents shall flee away from thee, and thou shalt live. Believe this text to be true, for true it is: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

"Ah!" saith another, "my case is still worse, sir; I am of a *despondent* turn of mind; I always look upon the black side of everything, and now if I read a promise I am sure it is not for me. If I see a threatening in God's Word, I am sure it is for me. I have no hope. I do not seem as if I should ever have any. I am in a dungeon

into which no light can enter: it is dark, dark, dark, and worse darkness is coming. While you are trying to comfort me, I put the comfort away." I know you. You are like the poor creature in the Psalm, of whom we read—"His soul abhorreth all manner of meat." Even the gospel itself he cannot relish. Yes; I know you; you are writing bitter things against yourself: this morning you have been newly dipping your pen in gall; but your writing is that of a poor bewildered creature; it is not to be taken notice of. I see you writing, in text hand, great black words of condemnation; but there is nothing in them all. Verily, verily I say unto thee, thine handwriting shall be blotted out, and the curse, causeless, shall not come. Thus saith the Lord, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand, for the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed you, and where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound." Broken in pieces, all asunder, ground between the millstones, reduced to nothing, yet believe this revelation of God, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Notice that "*much more*"—"much more abound." If thou canst grip it, and know it to be of a certainty the great principle upon which God acts, that grace shall outstrip sin, then there is hope of thee; nay, more than hope, there is salvation for thee on the spot. If thou believest in Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin, thou art forgiven.

Oh, my hearers, do not despise this grace! Come, and partake of it. Does any one say, as Paul foresaw that some would say, "Let us sin, that grace may abound"? Ah, then, such an infamous inference is the mark of the reprobate, and your damnation is just. He that turns God's mercy into a reason for sin, has within him something worse than a heart of stone: surely his conscience is seared with a hot iron. Beloved, I hope better things of you, for I trust that on the contrary, the sound of the silver bells of infinite love, free pardon, abounding grace, will make you hasten to the hospital of mercy, that you may receive healing for your sinfulness, strength for you feebleness, and joy for your sorrow. Lord, grant that in this house, in every case wherein sin has abounded, grace may yet more abound, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—174, 233, 231.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 11TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—Isaiah i. 20.

WHAT Isaiah said was, therefore, spoken by Jehovah. It was audibly the utterance of a man; but, really, it was the utterance of the Lord himself. The lips which delivered the words were those of Isaiah, but yet it was the very truth that "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." All Scripture, being inspired of the Spirit, is spoken by the mouth of God. However this sacred Book may be treated nowadays, it was not treated contemptuously, nor negligently, nor questioningly by the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Lord. It is noteworthy how he reverenced the written Word. The Spirit of God rested upon him personally, without measure, and he could speak out of his own mind the revelation of God, and yet he continually quoted the law and the prophets, and the Psalms; and always he treated the sacred writings with intense reverence, strongly in contrast with the irreverence of "modern thought." I am sure, brethren, we cannot be wrong in imitating the example of our divine Lord in our reverence for that Scripture, which cannot be broken. I say, if he, the anointed of the Spirit, and able to speak himself as God's mouth, yet quoted the sacred writings, and used the holy Book in his teachings, how much more should we, who have no spirit of prophecy resting upon us, and are not able to speak new revelations, come back to the law and to the testimony, and value every single word which "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken"? The like valuation of the Word of the Lord is seen in our Lord's apostles; for they treated the ancient Scriptures as supreme in authority, and supported their statements with passages from Holy Writ. The utmost degree of deference and homage is paid to the Old Testament by the writers of the New. We never find an apostle raising a question about the degree of inspiration in this book or that. No disciple of Jesus questions the authority of the books of Moses, or of the prophets. If you want to cavil or suspect, you find no sympathy in the teaching of Jesus, or any one of his apostles. The New Testament writers sit reverently down before the Old Testament and receive God's

words as such, without any question whatever. You and I belong to a school which will continue to do the same, let others adopt what behaviour they please. As for us and for our house, this priceless Book shall remain the standard of our faith and the ground of our hope so long as we live. Others may choose what gods they will, and follow what authorities they prefer; but, as for us, the glorious Jehovah is our God, and we believe concerning each doctrine of the entire Bible, that "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

I. Coming closely, then, to our text, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," our first head shall be—THIS IS OUR WARRANT FOR TEACHING SCRIPTURAL TRUTH. We preach because "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." It would not be worth our while to speak what Isaiah had spoken, if in it there was nothing more than Isaiah's thought; neither should we care to meditate hour after hour upon the writings of Paul, if there was nothing more than Paul in them. We feel no imperative call to expound and to enforce what has been spoken by men; but, since "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," it is woe unto us if we preach not the gospel! We come to you with, "Thus saith the Lord," and we should have no justifiable motive for preaching our lives away, if we have not this message.

The true preacher, the man whom God has commissioned, delivers his message *with awe and trembling*, because "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." He bears the burden of the Lord and bows under it. Ours is no trifling theme, but one which moves our whole soul. They called George Fox a Quaker, because when he spoke he would quake exceedingly through the force of the truth which he so thoroughly apprehended. Perhaps, if you and I had a clearer sight and a closer grip of God's Word, and felt more of its majesty, we should quake also. Martin Luther, who never feared the face of man, yet declared that when he stood up to preach he often felt his knees knock together under a sense of his great responsibility. Woe unto us if we dare to speak the Word of the Lord with less than our whole heart, and soul, and strength! Woe unto us if we handle the Word as if it were an occasion for display! If it were our own word, we might be studious of the graces of oratory; but if it be God's Word, we cannot afford to think of ourselves: we are bound to speak it, "not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." If we reverence the Word, it will not occur to us that we can improve upon it by our own skill in language. Oh, it were far better to break stones on the road than to be a preacher, unless one had God's Holy Spirit to sustain him; for our charge is solemn and our burden is heavy. The heart and soul of the man who speaks for God will know no ease, for he hears in his ears that warning admonition: "If the watchman warn them not they shall perish; but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." If we were commissioned to repeat the language of a king, we should be bound to do it decorously lest the king suffer damage; but if we rehearse the revelation of God, a profound awe should take hold upon us, and a godly fear lest we mar the message of God in the telling of it. No work is so important or honourable as the proclamation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and for that very reason it is weighted with a responsibility so solemn

that none may venture upon it lightly, nor proceed in it without an overwhelming sense of his need of great grace to perform his office aright. We live under intense pressure who preach a gospel of which we can assuredly say, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." We live rather in eternity than in time: we speak to you as though we saw the great white throne and the divine Judge before whom we must give in our account, not only for what we say, but for how we say it.

Dear brethren, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken the truth of God, we therefore endeavour to preach it with *absolute fidelity*. We repeat the Word as a child repeats his lesson. It is not ours to correct the divine revelation, but simply to echo it. I do not take it to be my office to bring you new and original thoughts of my own; but rather to say, "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Believing that "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," it is my duty to repeat it to you as correctly as I can after having heard it and felt it in my own soul. It is not mine to amend or adapt the gospel. What! Shall we attempt to improve upon what God has revealed? The Infinitely Wise—is he to be corrected by creatures of a day? Is the infallible revelation of the infallible Jehovah to be shaped, moderated, and toned down to the fashions and fancies of the hour? God forgive us if we have ever altered his Word unwittingly; wittingly we have not done so, nor will we. His children sit at his feet and receive of his words, and then they rise up in the power of his Spirit to publish far and near the Word which the Lord has given. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully," is the Lord's injunction to us. If we could abide with the Father, according to our measure, after the manner of the Lord Jesus, and then come forth from communion with him to tell what he has taught us in his Word, we should be accepted of the Lord as preachers, and accepted also of his living people far more than if we were to dive into the profound depths of science, or rise to the loftiest flights of rhetoric. What is the chaff to the wheat! What are man's discoveries to the teachings of the Lord! "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"; therefore, O man of God, add not to his words lest he add to thee the plagues which are written in his Book, and take not from them, lest he take thy name out of the Book of Life!

Again, dear friends, as "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we speak the divine truth *with courage and full assurance*. Modesty is a virtue; but hesitancy when we are speaking for the Lord is a great fault. If an ambassador sent by a great king to represent his majesty at a foreign court, should forget his office and only think of himself, he might be so humble as to lower the dignity of his prince, so timid as to betray his country's honour. He is bound to remember not so much what he is in himself, but whom he represents; therefore, he must speak boldly and with the dignity which beseems his office and the court he represents. It was the custom with certain Oriental despots to require ambassadors of foreign powers to lie in the dust before them. Some Europeans, for the sake of trade interests, submitted to the degrading ceremony; but when it was demanded of the representative of England, he scorned thus to lower his country. God

forbid that he who speaks for God should dishonour the King of kings by a pliant subservience. We preach not the gospel by your leave; we do not ask tolerance, nor court applause. We preach Christ crucified, and we speak boldly as we ought to speak, because it is God's Word, and not our own. We are accused of dogmatism; but we are bound to dogmatize when we repeat that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. We cannot use "ifs" and "buts," for we are dealing with God's "shalls" and "wills." If he says it is so, it is so; and there is an end of it. Controversy ceases when Jehovah speaks.

Those who fling aside our Master's authority may very well reject our testimony: we are content they should do so. But, if we speak that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, those who hear his word and refuse it, do so at their own peril. The wrong is done, not to the ambassador, but to the King; not to our mouth, but to the mouth of God, from whom the truth has proceeded.

We are urged to be charitable. We *are* charitable; but it is with our own money. We have no right to give away what is put into our trust and is not at our disposal. When we have to do with the truth of God we are stewards, and must deal with our Lord's exchequer, not on the lines of charity to human opinions, but by the rule of fidelity to the God of truth. We are bold to declare with full assurance that which the Lord reveals. That memorable word of the Lord to Jeremiah is needed by the servants of the Lord in these days: "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." When we speak for the Lord against error, we do not soften our tones; but we speak thunderbolts. When we come across false science, we do not lower our flag: we give place by subjection—no, not for an hour. One word of God is worth more than libraries of human lore. "It is written" is the great gun which silences all the batteries of man's thought. They should speak courageously who speak in the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

I will also add, under this head, that, because "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," therefore we feel bound to speak his Word *with diligence*, as often as ever we can, and *with perseverance*, as long as ever we live. Surely, it would be a blessed thing to die in the pulpit; spending one's last breath in acting as the Lord's mouth. Dumb Sabbaths are fierce trials to true preachers. Remember how John Newton, when he was quite unfit to preach, and even wandered a bit by reason of his infirmities and age, yet persisted in preaching; and when they dissuaded him, he answered with warmth, "What! Shall the old African blasphemer leave off preaching Jesus Christ while there is breath in his body?" So they helped the old man into the pulpit again, that he might once more speak of free grace and dying

love. If we had common themes to speak about, we might leave the pulpit as a weary pleader quits the forum; but as "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we feel his Word to be as fire in our bones, and we grow more weary with refraining than with testifying. O my brethren, the Word of the Lord is so precious that we must in the morning sow this blessed seed, and in the evening we must not withhold our hands. It is a living seed and the seed of life, and therefore we must diligently scatter it.

Brethren, if we get a right apprehension concerning gospel truth—that "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—it will move us to tell it out with *great ardour and zeal.* We shall not drone the gospel to a slumbering handful. Many of you are not preachers, but you are teachers of the young, or in some other way you try to publish the Word of the Lord—do it, I pray you, with much fervour of Spirit. Enthusiasm should be conspicuous in every servant of the Lord. Let those who hear you know that you are all there; that you are not merely speaking from the lips outwardly; but that from the depths of your soul, your very heart is welling up with a good matter when you speak of things which you have made, touching the King. The everlasting gospel is worth preaching, even if one stood on a burning faggot and addressed the crowd from a pulpit of flames. The truths revealed in Scripture are worth living for and dying for. I count myself thrice happy to bear reproach for the sake of the old faith. It is an honour of which I feel myself to be unworthy; and yet most truly can I use the words of our hymn—

> "Shall I, to soothe th' unholy throng,
> Soften thy truths and smooth my tongue?
> To gain earth's gilded toys, or flee
> The cross endured, my God, by thee?
>
> "The love of Christ doth me constrain
> To seek the wandering souls of men;
> With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
> To snatch them from the fiery wave.
>
> "My life, my blood I here present,
> If for thy truth they may be spent:
> Fulfil thy sovereign counsel, Lord!
> Thy will be done, thy name adored!"

I cannot speak out my whole heart upon this theme which is so dear to me, but I would stir you all up to be instant in season and out of season in telling out the gospel message. Specially repeat such a word as this—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And this: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Tell it out boldly, tell it out in every place, tell it out to every creature, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." How can you keep back the heavenly news? "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—shall not your mouth rejoice to repeat it? Whisper it in the ear of the sick; shout it in the corner of the streets; write it on your tablets; send it forth from the press: but everywhere let this be your great motive and warrant—you preach the gospel because "The

mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Let nothing be silent that hath a voice when the Lord hath given the Word by his own dear Son.

"Waft, waft, ye winds his story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till like a sea of glory
It spreads from pole to pole."

II. Let us now row in another direction for a moment or two. In the second place, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." THIS IS THE CLAIM OF GOD'S WORD UPON YOUR ATTENTION.

Every word which God has given us in this Book claims our attention, because of the *infinite majesty of him that spake it.* I see before me a Parliament of kings and princes, sages and senators. I hear one after another of the gifted Chrysostoms pour forth eloquence like the "Golden-mouthed." They speak, and they speak well. Suddenly, there is a solemn hush. What a stillness! Who is now to speak? They are silent because God the Lord is about to lift up his voice. Is it not right that they should be so? Doth he not say, "Keep silence before me, O islands"? What voice is like his voice? "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh." See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. O my hearer, let it not be said of you that you went through this life, God speaking to you in his Book, and you refusing to hear! It matters very little whether you listen to *me* or not; but it matters a very great deal whether you listen to God or not. It is he that made you; in his hands your breath is; and if he speaks, I implore you, open your ear, and be not rebellious. There is an infinite majesty about every line of Scripture, but especially about that part of Scripture in which the Lord reveals himself and his glorious plan of saving grace, in the person of his dear Son Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ hath a great claim upon you. Hear what Jesus preaches from the tree. He says, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live."

God's claim to be heard lies, also, in *the condescension which has led him to speak to us.* It was something for God to have made the world and bid us look at the work of his hands. Creation is a picture-book for children. But for God to speak in the language of mortal men is still more marvellous, if you come to think of it. I wonder that God spoke by the prophets; but I admire still more that he should have written down his word in black and white, in unmistakable language, which can be translated into all tongues, so that we may all see and read for ourselves what God the Lord has spoken to us; and what, indeed, he continues to speak; for what he has spoken he still speaks to us, as freshly as if he spake it for the first time. O glorious Jehovah; dost thou speak to mortal man? Can there be any that neglect to hear thee? If thou art so full of lovingkindness and tenderness that thou wilt stoop out of heaven to converse with thy sinful creatures, none but those who are more brutal than the ox and the ass will turn a deaf ear to thee!

God's Word has a claim, then, upon your attention because of its majesty and its condescension; but yet, further, it should win your ear because of *its intrinsic importance*. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—then it is no trifle. God never speaks vanity. No line of his writing treats of the frivolous themes of a day. That which may be forgotten in an hour is for mortal man, and not for the eternal God. When the Lord speaks, his speech is God-like, and its themes are worthy of one whose dwelling is infinity and eternity. God does not play with thee, man: wilt thou trifle with him? Wilt thou treat him as if he were altogether such a one as thyself? God is in earnest when he speaks to thee: wilt thou not in earnest listen? He speaks to thee of great things, which have to do with thy soul and its destiny. "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life." Thy eternal existence, thy happiness or thy misery, hang on thy treatment of that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. Concerning eternal realities he speaks to thee. I pray thee, be not so unwise as to turn away thine ear. Act not as if the Lord and his truth were nothing to you. Treat not the Word of the Lord as a secondary thing, which might wait thy leisure and receive attention when no other work was before thee: put all else aside, but hearken to thy God.

Depend upon it, if "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," there is an *urgent, pressing necessity*. God breaks not silence to say that which might as well have remained unsaid. His voice indicates great urgency. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, hear it; for he demands immediate attention. God does not speak without abundant reason; and, O my hearer, if he speaks to thee by his Word, I beseech thee, believe that there must be overwhelming cause for it! I know what Satan says: he tells thee that thou canst do very well without listening to God's Word. I know what thy carnal heart whispers: it says, "Listen to the voice of business, and of pleasure; but listen not to God." But, oh! if the Holy Spirit shall teach thy reason to be reasonable, and put thy mind in mind of true wisdom, thou wilt acknowledge that the first thing thou hast to do is to heed thy Maker. Thou canst hear the voices of others another time; but thine ear must hear God first, since he is first, and that which he speaks must be of first importance. Without delay do thou make haste to keep his commandments. Without reserve answer to his call, and say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." When I stand in this pulpit to preach the Gospel, I never feel that I may calmly invite you to attend to a subject which is one among many, and may very properly be let alone for a time should your minds be already occupied. No; you may be dead before I again speak with you, and so I beg for immediate attention. I do not fear that I may be taking you off from other important business by entreating you to attend to that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken; for no business has any importance in it compared with this: this is the master theme of all. It is your soul, your own soul, your ever-existing soul which is concerned, and it is your God that is speaking to you. Do hear him, I beseech you. I am not asking a favour of you when I request you to hear the Word of the Lord: it is a debt to your Maker which you are bound to pay. Yea, it is, moreover,

kindness to your own self. Even from a selfish point of view, I urge you to hear what the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, for in his Word lies salvation. Hearken diligently to what your Maker, your Saviour, your best friend, has to say to you. "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation," but "incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Thus I have handled my text in two ways: it is warrant and motive for the preacher; it is a demand upon the attention of the hearer.

III. And now, thirdly, THIS GIVES TO GOD'S WORD A VERY SPECIAL CHARACTER. When we open this sacred Book, and say of that which is here recorded, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," then it gives to the teaching a special character.

In the Word of God the teaching has *unique dignity*. This Book is inspired as no other book is inspired, and it is time that all Christians avowed this conviction. I do not know whether you have seen Mr. Smiles' life of our late friend, George Moore; but in it we read that, at a certain dinner-party, a learned man remarked that it would not be easy to find a person of intelligence who believed in the inspiration of the Bible. In an instant George Moore's voice was heard across the table, saying boldly, "I do, for one." Nothing more was said. My dear friend had a strong way of speaking, as I well remember; for we have upon occasions vied with each other in shouting when we were together at his Cumberland home. I think I can hear his emphatic way of putting it—"I do, for one." Let us not be backward to take the old-fashioned and unpopular side, and say outright, "I do, for one." Where are we if our Bibles are gone? Where are we if we are taught to distrust them? If we are left in doubt as to which part is inspired and which is not, we are as badly off as if we had no Bible at all. I hold no theory of inspiration; I accept the inspiration of the Scriptures as a fact. Those who thus view the Scriptures need not be ashamed of their company; for some of the best and most learned of men have been of the same mind. Locke, the great philosopher, spent the last fourteen years of his life in the study of the Bible, and when asked what was the shortest way for a young gentleman to understand the Christian religion, he bade him read the Bible, remarking: "Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any admixture of error, for its matter." There are those on the side of God's Word whom you need not be ashamed of in the matter of intelligence and learning; and if it were not so, it should not discourage you when you remember that the Lord has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes. We believe with the apostle that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." It is better to believe what comes out of God's mouth, and be called a fool, than to believe what comes out of the mouth of philosophers, and be, therefore, esteemed a wise man.

There is also about that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken an *absolute certainty*. What man has said is unsubstantial, even when true. It is like grasping fog, there is nothing of it. But with God's Word you have something to grip at, something to have, and to

hold. This is substance and reality; but of human opinions we may say, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Though heaven and earth should pass away, yet not one jot or tittle of what God has spoken shall fail. We know that, and feel at rest. God cannot be mistaken. God cannot lie. These are postulates which no one can dispute. If "The mouth of God hath spoken it," this is the judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail; and henceforth we question no more.

Again: if "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we have in this utterance the special character of *immutable fixedness*. Once spoken by God, not only is it so now, but it always must be so. The Lord of Hosts hath spoken, and who shall disannul it? The rock of God's Word does not shift, like the quicksand of modern scientific theology. One said to his minister, "My dear sir, surely you ought to adjust your beliefs to the progress of science." "Yes," said he, "but I have not had time to do it to-day, for I have not yet read the morning papers." One would have need to read the morning papers and take in every new edition to know whereabout scientific theology now stands; for it is always chopping and changing. The only thing that is certain about the false science of this age is that it will be soon disproved. Theories, vaunted to-day, will be scouted to-morrow. The great scientists live by killing those who went before them. They know nothing for certain, except that their predecessors were wrong. Even in one short life we have seen system after system—the mushrooms, or rather the toadstools, of thought—rise and perish. We cannot adapt our religious belief to that which is more changeful than the moon. Try it who will: as for me, if "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," it is truth to me in this year of grace 1888; and if I stand amongst you a grey-headed old man somewhere in 1908, you will find me making no advance upon the divine ultimatum. If "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we behold in his revelation a gospel which is without variableness, revealing "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Brothers and sisters, we hope to be together for ever before the eternal throne, where bow the blazing Seraphim, and even then we shall not be ashamed to avow that same truth which this day we feed upon from the hand of our God.

> "For he's the Lord, supremely good,
> His mercy is for ever sure;
> His truth, which always firmly stood,
> To endless ages shall endure."

Here let me add that there is something unique about God's Word, because of *the almighty power which attends it*. "Where the word of a king is, there is power"; where the word of a God is, there is omnipotence. If we dealt more largely in God's own Word as "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we should see far greater results from our preaching. It is God's Word, not our comment on God's Word, that saves souls. Souls are slain by the sword, not by the scabbard, nor by the tassels which adorn the hilt of it. If God's Word be brought forward in its native simplicity, no one can stand against it. The adversaries of God must fail before the Word as

chaff perishes in the fire. Oh, for wisdom to keep closer and closer to that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken!

I will say no more on this point, although the theme is a very large and tempting one; especially if I were to dwell upon the depth, the height, the adaptation, the insight and the self-proving power of that which "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken."

IV. Fourthly, and very briefly, THIS MAKES GOD'S WORD A GROUND OF GREAT ALARM TO MANY. Shall I read you the whole verse? "But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Every threatening that God hath spoken, because he hath spoken it, has a tremendous dread about it. Whether God threateneth a man or a nation, or the whole class of the ungodly, if they are wise they will feel a trembling take hold upon them, because "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." *God has never yet spoken a threatening that has fallen to the ground.* When he told Pharaoh what he would do, he did it; the plagues came thick and heavy upon him. When the Lord at any time sent his prophets to denounce judgments on the nations, he carried out those judgments. Ask travellers concerning Babylon, and Nineveh, and Edom, and Moab, and Bashan; and they will tell you of the heaps of ruins, which prove how the Lord carried out his warnings to the letter. One of the most awful things recorded in history is the siege of Jerusalem. You have read it, I do not doubt, in Josephus, or elsewhere. It makes one's blood run cold to think of it. Yet it was all foretold by the prophets, and their prophecies were fulfilled to the bitter end. You talk about God as being "love," and, if you mean by this that he is not severe in the punishment of sin, I ask you what you make of the destruction of Jerusalem. Remember that the Jews were his chosen nation, and that the city of Jerusalem was the place where his temple had been glorified with his presence. Brethren, if you roam from Edom to Zion, and from Zion to Sidon, and from Sidon to Moab, you will find, amid ruined cities, the tokens that God's words of judgment are sure. Depend on it, then, that when Jesus says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," it will be so. When he says, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," it will be so. The Lord never plays at frightening men. His Word is not an exaggeration to scare men with imaginary bugbears. There is emphatic truth in what the Lord says. He has always carried out his threatenings to the letter, and to the moment; and, depend upon it, he will continue to do so, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

It is of no avail to sit down, and draw inferences from the nature of God, and to argue, "God is love, and therefore he will not execute the sentence upon the impenitent." He knows what he will do better than you can infer; he has not left us to inferences, for he has spoken pointedly and plainly. He says, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and it will be so, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Infer what you like from his nature; but if you draw an inference contrary to what he has spoken, you have inferred a lie, and you will find it so.

"Alas," says one, "I shudder at the severity of the divine sentence." Do you? It is well! I can heartily sympathize with you.

What must he be that does not tremble when he sees the great Jehovah taking vengeance upon iniquity! The terrors of the Lord might well turn steel to wax. Let us remember that the gauge of truth is not our pleasure nor our terror. It is not my shuddering which can disprove what the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. It may even be a proof of its truth. Did not all the prophets tremble at manifestations of God? Remember how one of them cried. "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones." One of the last of the anointed seers fell at the Lord's feet as dead. Yet all the shrinking of their nature was not used by them as an argument for doubt.

O my unconverted and unbelieving hearers, do remember that if you refuse Christ, and rush upon the keen edge of Jehovah's sword, your unbelief of eternal judgment will not alter it, nor save you from it. I know why you do not believe in the terrible threatenings. It is because you want to be easy in your sins. A certain sceptical writer, when in prison, was visited by a Christian man, who wished him well, but he refused to hear a word about religion. Seeing a Bible in the hand of his visitor, he made this remark, "You do not expect me to believe in that book, do you? Why, if that book is true, I am lost for ever." Just so. Therein lies the reason for half the infidelity in the world, and all the infidelity in our congregations. How can you believe that which condemns you? Ah! my friends, if you would believe it to be true and act accordingly, you would also find in that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken a way of escape from the wrath to come; for the Book is far more full of hope than of dread. This inspired volume flows with the milk of mercy, and the honey of grace. It is not a Doomsday Book of wrath, but a Testament of grace. Yet, if you do not believe its loving warnings, nor regard its just sentences, they are true all the same. If you dare its thunders, if you trample on its promises, and even if you burn it in your rage, the holy Book still stands unaltered and unalterable; for "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Therefore, I pray you, treat the sacred Scriptures with respect, and remember that "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

V. And so I must finish, for time fails, when I notice, in the fifth place, that THIS MAKES THE WORD OF THE LORD THE REASON AND REST OF OUR FAITH. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," is the foundation of our confidence. There is forgiveness; for God has said it. Look, friend; you are saying, "I cannot believe that my sins can be washed away, I feel so unworthy." Yes, but "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Believe over the head of your unworthiness. "Ah," says one, "I feel so weak I can neither think, nor pray, nor anything else, as I should." Is it not written, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"; therefore, over the head of your inability still believe it, for it must be so.

I think I hear some child of God saying, "God has said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' but I am in great trouble; all the

circumstances of my life seem to contradict the promise": yet, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," and the promise must stand. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Believe God in the teeth of circumstances. If you cannot see a way of escape or a means of help, yet still believe in the unseen God, and in the truth of his presence; "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." I think I have come to this pass with myself, at any rate for the time present, that when circumstances deny the promise, I believe it none the less. When friends forsake me, and foes belie me, and my own spirit goes down below zero, and I am depressed almost to despair, I am resolved to hang to the bare word of the Lord, and prove it to be in itself an all-sufficient stay and support. I will believe God against all the devils in hell, God against Ahithophel, and Judas, and Demas, and all the rest of the turncoats; yea, and God against my own evil heart. His purpose shall stand, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Away, ye that contradict it: ours is a well-grounded confidence, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

By-and-by we shall come to die. The death-sweat shall gather on our brow, and perhaps our tongue will scarcely serve us. Oh that then, like the grand old German Emperor, we may say, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation," and, "He hath helped me with his name." When we pass through the rivers he will be with us, the floods shall not overflow us; "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." When we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we shall fear no evil, for he will be with us; his rod and his staff shall comfort us. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Ah! what will it be to break loose from these bonds and rise into the glory? We shall soon see the King in his beauty, and be ourselves glorified in his glory; for "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "He that believeth hath everlasting life"; therefore a glad eternity is ours.

Brethren, we have not followed cunningly devised fables. We are not "wanton boys that swim on bladders," which will soon burst under us; but we are resting on firm ground. We abide where heaven and earth are resting; where the whole universe depends; where even eternal things have their foundation: we rest on God himself. If God shall fail us, we gloriously fail with the whole universe. But there is no fear; therefore let us trust and not be afraid. His promise must stand; for "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." O Lord, it is enough. Glory be to thy name, through Christ Jesus! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah i. 1—20.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—191, 483, 119.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"AS WE HAVE HEARD, SO HAVE WE SEEN."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 18TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever."—Psalm xlviii. 8.

"As we have heard, so have we seen": this is seldom true. In many places we see what we have not heard, and what we have heard we do not see. Time was when many simpletons believed that the streets of London were paved with gold. I am sure I do not know any part of London in which a single lump of that metal can be found in the footway. Ten thousand idle tales there are in every country, of mines where fortunes may be dug out of the earth, and plains where wealth forces itself on the immigrant; but how seldom do we hear the good news, "As we have heard, so have we seen."

But when you come into the "City of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God," the reports about it are true, and the truth exceeds the report; for, like the Queen of Sheba, we cry, "The half was not told me." When we speak of the privileges of the Church of God on earth it is impossible to exaggerate. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Behold, what blessings, what riches, what royalties the Lord Jesus bestows upon his chosen! How cleansed they are by his blood! How quickened by his life! How honoured by his glorious enthronement at the right hand of the Father! You cannot speak of Zion, and her prosperity, in too exulting a style. Happy art thou, O Israel! And if we speak of the city of God as it shines in full splendour above, words fail us to set it forth. I doubt not when we arrive at its blest abodes, and tread its golden streets, and wear our crowns of immortality, we shall not only say, "As we have heard, so have we seen," but we shall be lost in wonder and surprise at the overwhelming revelations of divine love.

It is always true of the things of God, and of the church of God—"As we have heard, so have we seen." What his Word promises his work performs. This thought will be the clue of my sermon, and my line of discourse will be guided by the text. May the Holy Spirit make it useful to us all!

I. Our first observation upon the text is this—IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT WE LISTEN TO TRUE WITNESSES; for, else, we shall not be able to say, "As we have heard, so have we seen." If we listen to false witnesses, the more we believe them the worse for us: it will not be faith but credulity, and in due time there will be a sad awakening from idle dreams. It is of the first importance to you all that you should hear the Word of God, and receive the truth as it is in Jesus; so that, both in the throng of life, and when you stand upon the borders of death, and in the changeless state of eternity, you may be able to say, "We thank God for the gospel which we heard; for what we heard with our ears has been verified in our lives."

The Israelites who sang this forty-eighth Psalm had heard of Jerusalem and its Temple; of Jehovah, and of his sure defence of his chosen city: how had they heard of it?

They had heard of it by reading for themselves, or listening to the reading of *the Word of God*. They had five books of Moses, and other writings. In these books they read marvellous stories of what Jehovah had done for his people. They would remember well how the Lord wrought for his chosen in Egypt, and how he brought them out of the house of bondage with a high hand and an outstretched arm. They would read the record of God's merciful provision for the tribes in the wilderness, of his victories over their enemies, such as Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites. They would read with wonder the conquest of Canaan by Joshua, and the overthrow of tyrants by Gideon and Barak and Jephthah. They would see what the Lord wrought by his servant David, and by others who trusted him in the old times. All this would raise high their confidence in Jehovah; and now it had come to pass that, while Jehoshaphat was king, the holy city had been beleaguered by confederate Moabites, and Edomites, and Ammonites; and once more the Lord had made bare his holy arm and given a glorious triumph to Judah, without it being necessary for his people to strike a single blow. The adversaries, moved with mutual jealousy, had fallen upon one another, and become their own executioners. When the men of Judah saw this, they cried, "The old Book is true. Jehovah has wrought wonders before our eyes; as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts."

My brethren, attend carefully to what this Book records and reveals. It is now enlarged for your greater edification. Let this record be the report which you hear, concerning the Lord our God and his ways of grace. Let us give earnest heed to prophets and apostles and evangelists, who wrote in the name of the Lord; for in that case we shall hear truths which shall be so verified by experience, as to make us joyfully exclaim, "As we have heard, so have we seen."

These good people had also listened to *the ministers of God*. The priests, when they were not engaged in actual attendance at the Temple, were expected to teach the people. It is said of the tribe of Levi, "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law." Prophets also went through the land declaring the mind of God, and when the people heard these messengers, whom the Lord had sent to speak in his name, they heard that which the Lord fulfilled; for

none of the words of his servants were suffered to fall to the ground. How necessary it is that you should hear the truth spoken by those that are sent of God; for many false prophets have gone forth into the world. That which a man fetcheth out of his own mind may or may not be true; in any case you have a right to criticize and discuss it; but he that speaketh with "Thus saith the Lord" at the back of his words, stands on another platform. God's Word demands our reverent faith, and he that speaketh it faithfully speaketh with authority, and not as the scribes. Conscience within the breast of man echoes to the voice of divine truth, and owns its power, even when the will refuses to obey. Oh, that you may not, because of itching ears, heap to yourselves teachers; but may you hear the faithful messenger of God, so that you may say at the end, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God"!

No doubt, also, these good people had listened to *their fathers*. In these days the proud notion is abroad, that our fathers cannot have been so wise as their highly cultered sons. Yet in the long run, these same youths will alter their opinions as their years increase. Wisdom is neither in age nor in youth, but in God alone; yet I love to hear what grey-headed men have to say, who are further advanced in the journey of life than I am; for there is weight in their testimony. They may not speak with all the brilliance and fire of youth; but their speech has salt in it, derived from the certainty of actual experience. I love to think of those things which we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us; even the wondrous things which the Lord did in their day, and in the old time before them. The singers of our Psalm had listened to their gracious fathers, and when they saw the adversary round about the City of God, and afterwards marched forth to that strange battle, in which there was no clash of arms, but only a joyful division of the spoil—then, I say they knew that what their fathers had told them was really true, and they cried out in wonder, "As we have heard, so have we seen."

"In Zion God is known,
A refuge in distress;
How bright has his salvation shone
Through all her palaces!

Oft have our fathers told,
Our eyes have often seen,
How well our God secures the fold
Where his own sheep have been."

Those who were not actually in Jerusalem would hear the descriptions of *those who had been there*. They had heard of the Temple which was so "exceedingly magnifical"; of Jachin and Boaz, the two famous pillars; of the great altar, and the smoking sacrifices of the morning and the evening lamb; and the priests in their white attire ministering at the altar. They had heard of the high priest himself, when he came forth in his garments of glory and of beauty, and of the blessing wherewith he blessed the assembled people. In the cottage homes on the far-off hills, they had heard of all these things, and heard a truthful report, so that when they came to the holy city, and their feet stood within the gates of Jerusalem, their hearts beat high, and they said

within themselves, "We have not listened to cunningly devised fables; but as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts."

It is well, dear friends, for us to form our associations with a view to lasting benefit. Let the friends of God be your friends. Speak to those who speak well of God, and of his holy name. Cultivate the acquaintance of those who, by experience, are able to inform you whether these things are so. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." He that talks much with experienced Christians will acquire much assurance in the things of God. It is most important for us that we receive the recorded witness of ancient saints, and the hearty testimony of living worthies, that afterwards we may be able to say, "As we have heard, so have we seen." Some, nowadays, are inclined to hear everything, bad, good, and indifferent. I believe that hearing everything will end in hearing nothing. That text is often quoted and misunderstood, which says, "Prove all things." If men really mean what they say and are going to prove all things, I would persuade them to begin with their bodies, and not at first to run great risks with their souls. Gentlemen, I invite you to begin with commoner things than the gospel; for instance—commence with proving all the patent medicines, and next prove all the drugs of the chemist. If you survive the process, it will then be time to go round and prove all the ministers, and all the different doctrines of this wretched period. If you survive the drugs and poisons, you will not survive the false doctrines. False doctrines cannot be proved, and you need not make the attempt. It is only the truth which is capable of proof. The text does not mean "experiment upon everything"; but receive nothing until it has been proved to be true and good. The most of us are not appointed to the office of Universal Taster: we are not commissioned to taste all deadly things that we may know their precise effect: we are far better employed in holding fast that which is good. The truths which we have already proved to be the truth of God, we hold as with a death-grip; and, as we hold them fast, we also hold them forth. That which we accept for ourselves we commend to others: this is a far safer and healthier exercise than imitating the Athenians in their desire to be for ever hearing some new thing. Take heed what you hear, lest you be not able to say, "As we have heard, so have we seen."

II. Secondly, GOOD HEARING LEADS ON TO SEEING—"As we have heard, so have we seen." You cannot all use those words. Some of you have heard, and heard, but have never yet seen. The man who is content with one inlet to his mind, namely, his ears, but never uses his eyes, must imagine that God has made a mistake, and has given him more senses than he needs. Surely this argues a want of sense. Dear friends, you are not only invited to hear the gospel, but the Lord Jesus says to you, as he said to his first disciples, "Come and see." "O taste and see that the Lord is good." You are invited to see for yourselves whether these things be so. You will ask how can a hearer of the gospel become a seer of it?

Note first, that he can do this *by examining the facts* which he hears stated, and judging whether they are really so. The Scripture tells

you that your heart is deceitful—see whether it be not so. It tells you that there is a natural inclination in man towards evil—study yourself, and see whether this is not the case. It tells you that there is in human nature an impotence towards that which is truly good, and an aversion to God. Seriously consider whether your own life, as a natural man, does not prove the truth of these charges. There are some things about yourself, while as yet you are unconverted, which you have heard of in the Scriptures, and I would urge you to see whether they are not true in your own case. It will be a great help to you if you will examine into these things in reference to your own self. The subject for consideration is near at hand, and it will be, in many ways, useful to yourself to know whether Holy Scripture gives a true description of human nature, as you find it in yourself.

We further see what we hear, when we *obey the commands and receive the blessings promised upon obedience.* For instance, you are bidden to confess your sins; now see whether this is true. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins"—not only hear the precept, but see whether the promise is true. Here is another test—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You have heard it hundreds of times: come and see for yourself whether such a rest is given. Obey the precept, that you may receive the promise which hangs upon the precept.

We also turn hearing into sight when, receiving the blessings which are promised to faith, *we enter into a new life.* Some of us can bear witness that we have entered into a new world; that things which are now everything to us, were nothing to us a little while ago. As to a deaf man there is no sound, as to a blind man there is no light, so to us a few years ago there were no spiritual things; for we were devoid of those spiritual faculties by which spiritual things are discerned. But, now that we have believed in Jesus, we have passed into another universe; and we now possess a life as much above the life of our former state as the mental life is above that of the brute, which perisheth. We know that there is a heavenly life, for we possess it; and in the power of it we see a thousand things not dreamed of in the common man's philosophy. We heartily wish that all of you who hear the gospel would see its truths, so that you might say with the singers in this Psalm, "As we have heard, so have we seen."

The promises of God are of little service to a man if he merely hears them or reads them, and has no further dealing with them. They are like a cheque which is kept for months and years in a drawer, and never presented at the bank. The promises of God must be presented by prayerful faith to the Lord himself. The sacred promises, though in themselves most sure and precious, are of no avail for the comfort and sustenance of the soul, unless you grasp them by faith, plead them in prayer, expect them by hope, and receive them with gratitude. Oh, that you might say of every promise of God, "As we have heard, so have we seen."

The best hearing is that which leads to seeing. When a man says, "The Word of God tells me so, and I will test it for myself"—that man is in a very hopeful state. To this we invite our hearers. The

banquet is spread, and rich are the viands; but do not so trust our testimony as to stay away. Come and see for yourselves. We tell you that there is a great atonement made by the blood of Jesus, which will at once wash out the most scarlet sins. Believe our message so far as to come and try it for yourselves, and you will soon exclaim, "As we have heard, so have we seen."

III. I beg your attention to the third point, which is this: that SEEING WONDERFULLY CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF WHAT WE HEAR.

We are bound to believe God, even when we cannot see. That the Lord has said it, would be quite enough for us if we reverenced him as we ought. But it does help us very much when, having implicitly believed in God's testimony, he grants us grace to see that what we have believed is most surely true. Let me show how the experience of a believing man confirms the truth of what he has heard.

To go back to where I was just now, all that Holy Scripture says about *our ruin* may be seen to be true. Many of us have not only heard, but we have felt the evil result of sin upon our minds and hearts. We know that sin dwelleth in us, and strives for the mastery. We can never doubt that our natural tendencies are faulty, and that our best desires are imperfect. Since the Holy Spirit convinced us of sin, the existence of a foul fountain within our nature is a fact which we cannot doubt. Sin's infinite demerit is, also, a truth to which our conscience gives solemn assent. I remember when I learned this lesson, with the law as my schoolmaster. If any one had asked me whether I deserved to be sent to the lowest hell, my tears would have owned that no punishment could be too severe for sin like mine. Whenever I read a terrible threatening in Scripture, I gave an inward assent to it in my quickened conscience; yea, and I do so now. Apart from my Lord on the cross, a deep damnation must be mine. It does not matter what modern deceivers preach; you may depend upon it, that men when they come to die, if their consciences are at all awake, are persuaded that the threatenings of Holy Scripture are true. Sentiment kicks against eternal punishment; but conscience cries "Amen" to the righteous sentence of the law. When the Spirit of God awakens conscience, it ceases to trifle with sin, and no longer denies that an awful penalty must surely be its consequence.

I am sure I can appeal to those of you who have seen the Lord in his glory, so as to abhor yourselves in dust and ashes, and to those of you who have seen yourselves, so that you have been ashamed and confounded at your own ways. I say, I can appeal to you to confirm the most solemn statements of Holy Scripture. However much its denunciations may make you shudder, your inmost soul consents to the truth of them. When the Holy Ghost opens up before us the bottomless pit of our natural depravity, we admit that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." We believe in the Fall, for we are fallen; we are sure we are not as the Lord made us. We believe in the hereditary taint of natural depravity; for we mourn it in ourselves. We believe in the impotence of fallen humanity; for we are ourselves without strength. We

believe in our personal desert of the wrath of God, for we are sure it is so, and our only comfort is that the sentence of death has been fulfilled in us, in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Substitute. All that the Holy Scripture saith about sin and its results, we do from our heart of hearts confirm, for "As we have heard, so have we seen."

Brighter things, however, have we heard and seen. Brethren, we heard that there is *a calling of God*, whereby he separates his chosen from the rest of mankind; and we know that there is such an effectual calling by the Spirit of God, for we have been so called. We heard the general call by which men were invited to come to Christ; but we refused that call. We learned that there was a special effectual call of the Holy Spirit, by which men are sweetly drawn to Jesus, and we found this report to be true, for we have been so drawn. The Spirit of God did not drag us to Christ by our ears, but he drew us with bands of love. We came to Jesus with the full consent of our renewed wills, and yet against our old wills. Without violating one single delicate law of our mind, the Lord constrained us to run in the way of salvation. As we have heard concerning the effectual calling of the Spirit of God, so have we seen, and we cannot but bear witness of it this day.

We heard, too, that if we came to Jesus as we were, *he would receive us;* and he did receive us. We heard that he would graciously forgive; and he did forgive. We heard that in forgiveness, he would give us peace, and we have found it so. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We heard that poor sinners, justified by faith, received a joy unspeakable, and we have received that joy. We bear our testimony that "This man receiveth sinners": we bear witness that he casts out none that come to him. We declare to you that, in the fulness of his grace, he puts rebels in the children's place. Yes, "As we have heard, so have we seen." The bravest preacher of the gospel has never preached more gospel than is true. The boldest testifier to the free grace of God has never said more for the freedom and fulness of grace than he ought to have said. Exaggeration is impossible. When you would describe infinite grace, you may lay the reins upon the neck of thought.

Then we heard that there was such a thing as *regeneration*. We used to hear with wonder that declaration, "Ye must be born again." We were told that we must pass from death unto life: that old things must pass away, and all things must become new. We heard it attentively and believingly; but now we have gone further—we have seen it. Many of you know the great and radical change, because you have experienced it. You can say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." We have passed out of a dead world into a living world. Having been buried with Christ, we have also risen with him, and our life dwells and flourishes in a new world. We are conscious that a new heart beats within us; a new life looks out of our eyes, and moves in our members. The new birth is a fact: "As we have heard, so have we seen."

We used to hear of *the Holy Spirit*, and it seemed to us when we

heard it, that his operations and indwellings were mysteries incomprehensible. How could God the Holy Ghost dwell in men, and make their bodies his temples? We marvelled as we heard of his convincing men of sin, withering their self-righteousness, enkindling hope in their bosoms, leading them to Jesus, renewing them, comforting them, sanctifying them, illuminating them, preserving them. We used to hear of all this; but now with delight we can stand before you, and say, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God." The Holy Ghost has convinced us of sin. What a "spirit of bondage" he was to us for a time! He seemed to fetter hand and foot, and shut us up under the law! Then he brake our chains asunder, and taught us that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. What a liberty it was! How joyfully did we leap, when we were set free from the tyranny of sin. Since then the blessed Spirit has continually quickened, guided, and strengthened us. Speak, ye sons and daughters of mourning, and tell how the Comforter has graciously consoled you! He has also taught us, and led us into all truth. He has been in us life, and light, and fire. He has moved upon our minds, and he has ever given us in the same hour what we should speak! What a permeating influence is that of the Holy Ghost! How he makes us mourn for sin! How he constrains us to follow after holiness! How he uplifts and elevates the heart, causing our conversation to be in heaven, while our body is still on earth. "As we have heard, so have we seen"; and we have never heard more of the glorious power of the Holy Spirit than is absolutely true: our own joyful experience leads us to believe that he can work all gracious things in us.

Further, to show you how experience supports the Word of God, we were told many times over that *God hears prayer*. We were reminded of the Saviour's words, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Brothers and sisters, how have you found it? Has prayer been a mere pious amusement? or have you found it to be a reality? Have you not prayed yourselves out of the dark into the sunlight; prayed yourselves out of the low dungeon of despondency to the mountain-top of communion; prayed yourselves out of the depths of despair up to the throne of God? "Out of the belly of hell, cried I," said one, "and thou heardest my voice." Oh, the omnipotence of prayer! The facts which prove the prevalence of prayer would convince anybody unless he is determined not to be convinced. There are numbers of persons here whom any lawyer would be glad to put in the witness-box on any matter of fact; for their statements would be questioned by nobody, since they are well known for integrity and truth. These persons are prepared to bear solemn witness, as in the presence of God, that many a time God has as distinctly heard their prayers as if he had thrust his hand through yonder skies. As we have heard about prayer, so have we seen; and none can drive this faith out of us, since it is confirmed by what we have seen over and over again in actual experience. So long as reason holds her seat we must and will believe in prayer.

Yes, let me remind you, also, that we heard with our ears, that there is a God of *Providence* who rules and over-rules all things. We were

glad to sing "The Lord will provide." We used joyfully to hear the congregation say:—

> "Though cisterns be broken, and creatures all fail,
> The word he has spoken will surely prevail."

We believe in a gracious providence, and we have also seen it! Time does not suffice this morning for us to narrate personal incidents, but assuredly my own experience teems with them: in times of need the Lord has showed himself quite as able and willing to supply the needs of his servant in these days as he was to feed the nation in the wilderness when he rained manna from heaven for them, day by day. All things have worked together for good to them that love God, even until now. We can look back upon experiences which, at the time, were especially bewildering and perplexing; and of those very experiences we can now say, "Blessed be God for them!" If I were to ask those to stand up who have seen undoubted proofs of providential care, I believe thousands of you would rise from your seats, and bear witness that the hand of the Lord still works wisely and powerfully, for those who trust in him. We heard that it was so, and we have seen that the report was true to the letter. Even as to temporal things, the Lord is gracious; and as to eternal things, he is beyond conception kind.

One thing more I will notice, and have done with these verifications which sight gives to hearing. We have often heard that those who believe in God have *hope in their deaths*. We have been told over and over again, that

> "Jesus can make a dying bed
> Feel soft as downy pillows are."

Now, we have not seen this for ourselves, for we have not yet forded the last river; but we have seen it in others. I suppose that the most of you have distinctly seen that the end of the righteous man is peace I, from my calling, have many scores of times seen saints in their last hours. This is the witness I put on record—the very happiest persons I have ever met with have been departing believers. I have not met at weddings, nor at jubilee feasts, nor in moments of singular prosperity, such joyful persons as I have seen amid weakness and pain upon their dying beds. The only sons of men for whom I have felt any envy have been dying members of this very church, whose hands I have grasped in their passing away. Almost without any exception I have seen in them holy delight and triumph; and in the exceptions to this exceeding joy I have seen deep peace, exhibited in a calm and deliberate readiness to enter into the presence of their God. They have been as ready for the eternal world as they would have been to rise from their beds and return to their daily callings on the Monday morning. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding" has kept their hearts and minds even when the joy of the Lord has not lifted them into transports or ecstacies. Saintly death-beds are grand evidences of Christianity. It is something to say in our last hours, "As we have heard, so have we seen."

I can truly say that hitherto my own experience and observation have confirmed the teachings of the Word of God. I have not yet

met with anything which could shake my confidence in the divine revelation. I trust I am neither an absolute fool nor a blind bigot, who would shut his eyes to reason: I would not ignore a certified fact, either in science, or history, or in the world of mental life; and yet I know of no fact which can disprove so much as one of the solemn declarations of God, nor even cast a shadow of suspicion upon a doctrine of Holy Scripture. I have *heard* much, but I have *seen* nothing of the science which disproves the Scriptures: there is no such science, it is an imposture which has stolen the name. Our knowing is far better than our theorizing; and whatever our theorizing may have done, our actual knowledge has never been on the side of the baptized infidelity of the advanced school. All our experience makes us say, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts."

On this point I have spent the strength of my discourse; the remaining two heads shall be treated briefly, although they are of great practical value.

IV. When hearing turns to seeing, and is confirmed by it, then it leads to witnessing.

The text, you see, is itself a testimony—"As we have heard, so have we seen." In these days, every man that can witness for the truth ought to do so: even if he stammers, he must not be silent. So many are decrying the truth, that, if in your heart and conscience you have proved it true, you are bound to give to the Lord the testimony of even a stammerer. I suppose Moses could do no more than that, for he was a man slow in speech; but when he would have preferred to be quiet the Lord said to him, "Who hath made man's mouth?" Your mouth is as God made it: use it as best you can, and speak up for his name and cause.

Such testimony as that of our text is *sometimes involuntary*, and is none the less precious on that account. When these good people had seen the Moabites, and Ammonites, and Edomites marching round Jerusalem in their pride, and a few days afterwards had beheld them cold in death, they could not help crying, "As we have heard, so have we seen." You could not have kept them quiet in the presence of such a marvel. You could not have muzzled them into silence. They were so taken aback, so astounded at what God had done, that they cried aloud, "As we have heard, so have we seen." So, when you have tasted and handled of the good things of God, I am sure you will have to tell others of your glorious discoveries! your mouth will be filled with laughter and your tongue with singing, till those who are round about you will be compelled to say, "The Lord hath done great things for them," and you will answer, "Yes, the Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Jesus said, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength," when the children were shouting in the Temple. Young converts, if they have newly tasted that the Lord is gracious, must sound out their joys. Who would stop them? If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out. But your involuntary witnessing must lead up to constant *voluntary* witnessing for your Lord, and his holy cause. O ye who are on the Lord's side, awake, arise, or be condemned as traitors!

Our testimony should be *very frequent*. Believers would do a thousand times more good if they were not so particularly careful to avoid offending men of the world. If Christ Jesus offends people, they ought to be offended; for he is sure to be a "Stumbling-stone and rock of offence" to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient. We have heard of a great warrior, who was more at home on the field of battle than amid the ceremonies of courts; his sword nearly tripped him up when walking backwards from the throne, and his majesty remarked that his sword seemed very much in the way. "Yes," said the brave man, "and your majesty's enemies find it so." If we give offence by the gospel to those who take no active part in holy warfare, let us not be put out of countenance; we are soldiers of the cross, and we do not regret that our religion does trouble certain people, for they ought to be troubled. The man who has never offended anybody by his religion, has none worth having; rest assured of that. There are times and places when it must be seen that we are the friends of God, and, consequently, cannot be in league with his enemies. Silence when truth is questioned, will prove us to be recreant to Christ, and false to our profession. Let us speak when it may bring upon us sneers, and slanders. Why, what matters if they do sneer? We shall survive *that*. We do not live on the breath of other men's nostrils. We ask not leave of mortal man to be true to our convictions; but we will often, and far more often than we have done, bear witness that "As we have heard, so have we seen."

This we should be sure to do more earnestly, if we were more thoughtful. Read the ninth verse:—"We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." As a true man thinks in his heart, he will speak with his lips. That which lies in the well of your thought, will come up in the bucket of your speech. Think much of what the Lord has done for you, and then you will bear witness for him.

This needs to be done on a far larger scale than at present. Read the rest of the Psalm, and see how the Psalmist puts it: "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth." Oh, for more of the missionary spirit, more telling out to the ends of the earth of what the Lord has done! What were the stars, if they did not shine? What were the sun, if he did not make our day? What were the rivers, if they did not water the lands? What were the sea itself, if it did not act as the pulsing heart of the world? What are Christians, if they do not shine as lights? Piety bottled up is dead. Religion put into a tin and hermetically sealed is useless. Why not go to heaven at once, if you do no good on earth? Nay, but would they have you among the angels? He that is of no use in the world is not fit for heaven. He who does not glorify God on earth, would not glorify him in heaven. Where shall we put useless people? What shall be done with salt that has lost its savour? I know not where it can be put, for Jesus says it is not fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; and, if men cast it out, what will God do with it. If even men cannot use dead religionists, what will God do with them? If a vine does not bear fruit it is good for nothing: you cannot boil a pot with it, nor even make out of its wood a hook by which to hang the

pot over the fire. Without fruitfulness the vine becomes the most worthless of all trees; and without testimony for truth the professing Christian is of no use whatever. Creation's blot, creation's blank, is the best description of a dead professor. Think what you will of yourselves, O ye savourless professors, your religion is mere emptiness, a vain pretence. O children of God, stand up and bear your witness—

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus!"

in this day of blasphemy and rebuke.

V. For, lastly, HEARING, SEEING, WITNESSING, GOD WILL GIVE YOU A YET FULLER ASSURANCE THAN YOU HAVE AS YET. Permit me to read the text again:—"As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: *God will establish it for ever.*" That is the conclusion which the saint comes to, when he has tried the truth for himself, and borne witness to the result of his trial. God will never leave his Church. God will never forfeit his word. God will never desert his gospel. Because he is Jehovah of hosts and changes not, and has all power at his disposal; because he is our Lord, our God in covenant. He cannot desert the work of his own hands, nor leave the people of his love. Because his honour is bound up in the whole enterprise that Christ undertook, he must go through with it, and he must arrive at a glorious conclusion. God will establish it for ever. Come, my brethren, let us cast aside all doubts about what the future is to be. The battle rages, the foe is as furious as he is subtle, while we are weak as water and can do nothing by ourselves; but let us not despond; for, if the gospel be God's gospel, he will take care of it; if the church be Christ's Church, the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. The battle is not ours, but the Lord's: in his name let us set up our banners and cry with full confidence of victory, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Hallelujah, hallelujah. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xlviii.; 2 Chronicles xx. 1—30.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—48, 734, 675.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE RENT VEIL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 25TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."—Matt. xxvii. 50, 51.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."—Hebrews x. 19, 20.

THE death of our Lord Jesus Christ was fitly surrounded by miracles; yet it is itself so much greater a wonder than all besides, that it as far exceeds them as the sun outshines the planets which surround it. It seems natural enough that the earth should quake, that tombs should be opened, and that the veil of the temple should be rent, when he who only hath immortality gives up the ghost. The more you think of the death of the Son of God, the more will you be amazed at it. As much as a miracle excels a common fact, so doth this wonder of wonders rise above all miracles of power. That the divine Lord, even though veiled in mortal flesh, should condescend to be subject to the power of death, so as to bow his head on the cross, and submit to be laid in the tomb, is among mysteries the greatest. The death of Jesus is the marvel of time and eternity, which, as Aaron's rod swallowed up all the rest, takes up into itself all lesser marvels.

Yet the rending of the veil of the temple is not a miracle to be lightly passed over. It was made of "fine twined linen, with cherubims of cunning work." This gives the idea of a substantial fabric, a piece of lasting tapestry, which would have endured the severest strain. No human hands could have torn that sacred covering; and it could not have been divided in the midst by any accidental cause; yet, strange to say, on the instant when the holy person of Jesus was rent by death, the great veil which concealed the holiest of all was "rent in twain from the top to the bottom." What did it mean? It meant much more than I can tell you now.

It is not fanciful to regard it as a solemn act of mourning on the part of the house of the Lord. In the East men express their sorrow by rending their garments; and the temple, when it beheld its Master die, seemed struck with horror, and rent its veil. Shocked at

the sin of man, indignant at the murder of its Lord, in its sympathy with him who is the true temple of God, the outward symbol tore its holy vestment from the top to the bottom. Did not the miracle also mean that from that hour the whole system of types, and shadows, and ceremonies had come to an end? The ordinances of an earthly priesthood were rent with that veil. In token of the death of the ceremonial law, the soul of it quitted its sacred shrine, and left its bodily tabernacle as a dead thing. The legal dispensation is over. The rent of the veil seemed to say—"Henceforth God dwells no longer in the thick darkness of the Holy of Holies, and shines forth no longer from between the cherubim. The special enclosure is broken up, and there is no inner sanctuary for the earthly high priest to enter: typical atonements and sacrifices are at an end."

According to the explanation given in our second text, the rending of the veil chiefly meant that the way into the holiest, which was not before made manifest, was now laid open to all believers. Once in the year the high priest solemnly lifted a corner of this veil with fear and trembling, and with blood and holy incense he passed into the immediate presence of Jehovah; but the tearing of the veil laid open the secret place. The rent from top to bottom gives ample space for all to enter who are called of God's grace, to approach the throne, and to commune with the Eternal One. Upon that subject I shall try to speak this morning, praying in my inmost soul that you and I, with all other believers, may have boldness actually to enter into that which is within the veil at this time of our assembling for worship. Oh, that the Spirit of God would lead us into the nearest fellowship which mortal men can have with the Infinite Jehovah!

First, this morning, I shall ask you to consider *what has been done.* The veil has been rent. Secondly, we will remember *what we therefore have:* we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Then, thirdly, we will consider *how we exercise this grace:* we "enter by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."

I. First, think of WHAT HAS BEEN DONE. In actual historical fact the glorious veil of the temple has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom: as a matter of spiritual fact, which is far more important to us, *the separating legal ordinance is abolished.* There was under the law this ordinance—that no man should ever go into the holiest of all, with the one exception of the high priest, and he but once in the year, and not without blood. If any man had attempted to enter there he must have died, as guilty of great presumption and of profane intrusion into the secret place of the Most High. Who could stand in the presence of him who is a consuming fire? This ordinance of distance runs all through the law; for even the holy place, which was the vestibule of the Holy of Holies, was for the priests alone. The place of the people was one of distance. At the very first institution of the law when God descended upon Sinai, the ordinance was, "Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about." There was no invitation to draw near. Not that they desired to do so, for the mountain was altogether on a smoke, and "even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." "The Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people,

lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish." If so much as a beast touch the mountain it must be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. The spirit of the old law was reverent distance. Moses, and here and there a man chosen by God, might come near to Jehovah; but as for the bulk of the people, the command was, "Draw not nigh hither." When the Lord revealed his glory at the giving of the law, we read,—"When the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off." All this is ended. The precept to keep back is abrogated, and the invitation is, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." "Let us draw near" is now the filial spirit of the gospel. How thankful I am for this! what a joy it is to my soul! Some of God's people have not yet realized this gracious fact, for still they worship afar off. Very much of prayer is to be highly commended for its reverence; but it has in it a lack of childlike confidence. I can admire the solemn and stately language of worship which recognizes the greatness of God; but it will not warm my heart nor express my soul until it has also blended therewith the joyful nearness of that perfect love which casteth out fear, and ventures to speak with our Father in heaven as a child speaketh with its father on earth. My brother, no veil remains. Why dost thou stand afar off, and tremble like a slave? Draw near with full assurance of faith. The veil is rent: access is free. Come boldly to the throne of grace. Jesus has made thee nigh, as nigh to God as even he himself is. Though we speak of the holiest of all, even the secret place of the Most High, yet it is of this place of awe, even of this sanctuary of Jehovah, that the veil is rent; therefore, let nothing hinder thine entrance. Assuredly no law forbids thee; but infinite love invites thee to draw nigh to God.

This rending of the veil signified, also, *the removal of the separating sin.* Sin is, after all, the great divider between God and man. That veil of blue and purple and fine twined linen could not really separate man from God: for he is, as to his omnipresence, not far from any one of us. Sin is a far more effectual wall of separation: it opens an abyss between the sinner and his Judge. Sin shuts out prayer, and praise, and every form of religious exercise. Sin makes God walk contrary to us, because we walk contrary to him. Sin, by separating the soul from God, causes spiritual death, which is both the effect and the penalty of transgression. How can two walk together except they be agreed? How can a holy God have fellowship with unholy creatures? Shall justice dwell with injustice? Shall perfect purity abide with the abominations of evil? No, it cannot be. Our Lord Jesus Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He taketh away the sin of the world, and so the veil is rent. By the shedding of his most precious blood we are cleansed from all sin, and that most gracious promise of the new covenant is fulfilled—"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." When sin is gone, the barrier is broken down, the unfathomable gulf is filled. Pardon, which removes sin, and justification, which brings righteousness, make up a deed of clearance so real and so complete that nothing now divides the sinner from his reconciled God. The Judge is now the Father: he, who once must necessarily have condemned, is found justly absolving

and accepting. In this double sense the veil is rent: the separating ordinance is abrogated, and the separating sin is forgiven.

Next, be it remembered that *the separating sinfulness is also taken away through our Lord Jesus.* It is not only what we have *done*, but what we *are* that keeps us apart from God. We have sin engrained in us: even those who have grace dwelling in them have to complain, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." How can we commune with God with our eyes blinded, our ears stopped, our hearts hardened, and our senses deadened by sin? Our whole nature is tainted, poisoned, perverted by evil; how can we know the Lord? Beloved, through the death of our Lord Jesus the covenant of grace is established with us, and its gracious provisions are on this wise: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." When this is the case, when the will of God is inscribed on the heart, and the nature is entirely changed, then is the dividing veil which hides us from God taken away: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Blessed are all they that love righteousness and follow after it, for they are in a way in which the Righteous One can walk in fellowship with them. Spirits that are like God are not divided from God. Difference of nature hangs up a veil; but the new birth, and the sanctification which follows upon it, through the precious death of Jesus, remove that veil. He that hates sin, strives after holiness, and labours to perfect it in the fear of God, is in fellowship with God. It is a blessed thing when we love what God loves, when we seek what God seeks, when we are in sympathy with divine aims, and are obedient to divine commands: for with such persons will the Lord dwell. When grace makes us partakers of the divine nature, then are we at one with the Lord, and the veil is taken away.

"Yes," saith one, "I see now how the veil is taken away in three different fashions; but still God is God, and we are but poor puny men: between God and man there must of necessity be a separating veil, caused by the great disparity between the Creator and the creature. How can the finite and the infinite commune? God is all in all, and more than all; we are nothing, and less than nothing; how can we meet?" When the Lord does come near to his favoured ones, they own how incapable they are of enduring the excessive glory. Even the beloved John said, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." When we have been specially conscious of the presence and working of our Lord, we have felt our flesh creep, and our blood chill; and then have we understood what Jacob meant when he said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." All this is true; for the Lord saith, "Thou canst not see my face and live." Although this is a much thinner veil than those I have already mentioned, yet it is a veil; and it is hard for man to be at home with God. But *the Lord Jesus bridges the separating distance.* Behold, the blessed Son of God has come into the world, and taken upon himself our nature! "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Though he is God as God

is God, yet is he as surely man as man is man. Mark well how in the person of the Lord Jesus we see God and man in the closest conceivable alliance; for they are united in one person for ever. The gulf is completely filled by the fact that Jesus has gone through with us even to the bitter end, to death, even to the death of the cross. He has followed out the career of manhood even to the tomb; and thus we see that the veil, which hung between the nature of God and the nature of man, is rent in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We enter into the holiest of all through his flesh, which links manhood to Godhead.

Now, you see what it is to have the veil taken away. Solemnly note that this avails only for believers: those who refuse Jesus refuse the only way of access to God. God is not approachable, except through the rending of the veil by the death of Jesus. There was one typical way to the mercy-seat of old, and that was through the turning aside of the veil; there was no other. And there is now no other way for any of you to come into fellowship with God, except through the rent veil, even the death of Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. Come this way, and you may come freely. Refuse to come this way, and there hangs between you and God an impassable veil. Without Christ you are without God, and without hope. Jesus himself assures you, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." God grant that this may not happen to any of you!

For believers the veil is not rolled up, but rent. The veil was not unhooked, and carefully folded up, and put away, so that it might be put in its place at some future time. Oh, no! but the divine hand took it and rent it from top to bottom. It can never be hung up again; that is impossible. Between those who are in Christ Jesus and the great God, there will never be another separation. "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" Only one veil was made, and as that is rent, the one and only separator is destroyed. I delight to think of this. The devil himself can never divide me from God now. He may and will attempt to shut me out from God; but the worst he could do would be to hang up a rent veil. What would that avail but to exhibit his impotence? God has rent the veil, and the devil cannot mend it. There is access between a believer and his God; and there must be such free access for ever, since the veil is not rolled up, and put on one side to be hung up again in days to come; but it is rent, and rendered useless.

The rent is not in one corner, but in the midst, as Luke tells us. It is not a slight rent through which we may see a little; but it is rent from the top to the bottom. There is an entrance made for the greatest sinners. If there had only been a small hole cut through it, the lesser offenders might have crept through; but what an act of abounding mercy is this, that the veil is rent in the midst, and rent from top to bottom, so that the chief of sinners may find ample passage! This also shows that for believers there is no hindrance to the fullest and freest access to God. Oh, for much boldness, this morning, to come where God has not only set open the door, but has lifted the door from its hinges; yea, removed it, post, and bar, and all!

I want you to notice that this veil, when it was rent, was rent by God, not by man. It was not the act of an irreverent mob; it was not the midnight outrage of a set of profane priests: it was the act of God alone. Nobody stood within the veil; and on the outer side of it stood the priests only fulfilling their ordinary vocation of offering sacrifice. It must have astounded them when they saw that holy place laid bare in a moment. How they fled, as they saw that massive veil divided without human hand in a second of time! Who rent it? Who but God himself? If another had done it, there might have been a mistake about it, and the mistake might need to be remedied by replacing the curtain; but if the Lord has done it, it is done rightly, it is done finally, it is done irreversibly. It is God himself who has laid sin on Christ, and in Christ has put that sin away. God himself has opened the gate of heaven to believers, and cast up a highway along which the souls of men may travel to himself. God himself has set the ladder between earth and heaven. Come to him now, ye humble ones. Behold, he sets before you an open door!

II. And now I ask you to follow me, dear friends, in the second place, to an experimental realization of my subject. We now notice WHAT WE HAVE: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest." Observe the threefold "having" in the paragraph now before us, and be not content without the whole three. *We have "boldness to enter in."* There are degrees in boldness; but this is one of the highest. When the veil was rent it required some boldness to *look* within. I wonder whether the priests at the altar did have the courage to gaze upon the mercy-seat. I suspect that they were so struck with amazement that they fled from the altar, fearing sudden death. It requires a measure of boldness steadily to look upon the mystery of God: "Which things the angels desire to look into." It is well not to look with a merely curious eye into the deep things of God. I question whether any man is able to pry into the mystery of the Trinity without great risk. Some, thinking to look there with the eyes of their natural intellect, have been blinded by the light of that sun, and have henceforth wandered in darkness. It needs boldness to look into the splendours of redeeming and electing love. If any did look into the holiest when the veil was rent, they were among the boldest of men; for others must have feared lest the fate of the men of Bethshemesh would be theirs. Beloved, the Holy Spirit invites you to look into the holy place, and view it all with reverent eye; for it is full of teaching to you. Understand the mystery of the mercy-seat, and of the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, and of the pot of manna, and of the tables of stone, and of Aaron's rod that budded. Look, look boldly through Jesus Christ: but do not content yourself with looking! Hear what the text says: "Having boldness to *enter in*." Blessed be God if he has taught us this sweet way of no longer looking from afar, but of entering into the inmost shrine with confidence! "Boldness to enter in" is what we ought to have.

Let us follow the example of the high priest, and, having entered, *let us perform the functions of one who enters in.* "Boldness to enter in" suggests that we act as men who are in their proper places. To stand within the veil filled the servant of God with an overpowering

sense of the divine presence. If ever in his life he was near to God, he was certainly near to God then, when quite alone, shut in, and excluded from all the world, he had no one with him, except the glorious Jehovah. O my beloved, may we this morning enter into the holiest in this sense! Shut out from the world, both wicked and Christian, let us know that the Lord is here, most near and manifest. Oh that we may now cry out with Hagar, "Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" Oh, how sweet to realize by personal enjoyment the presence of Jehovah! How cheering to feel that the Lord of hosts is with us! We know our God to be a very present help in trouble. It is one of the greatest joys out of heaven to be able to sing—Jehovah Shammah—the Lord is here. At first we tremble in the divine presence; but as we feel more of the spirit of adoption we draw near with sacred delight, and feel so fully at home with our God that we sing with Moses, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Do not live as if God were as far off from you as the east is from the west. Live not far below on the earth; but live on high, as if you were in heaven. In heaven you will be with God; but on earth he will be with you: is there much difference? He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Jesus hath made us nigh by his precious blood. Try day by day to live in as great nearness to God, as the high priest felt when he stood for a while within the secret of Jehovah's tabernacle.

The high priest had *a sense of communion with God;* he was not only near, but he spake with God. I cannot tell what he said, but I should think that on the special day the high priest unburdened himself of the load of Israel's sin and sorrow, and made known his requests unto the Lord. Aaron, standing there alone, must have been filled with memories of his own faultiness, and of the idolatries and backslidings of the people. God shone upon him, and he bowed before God. He may have heard things which it was not lawful for him to utter, and other things which he could not have uttered if they had been lawful. Beloved, do you know what it is to commune with God? Words are poor vehicles for this fellowship; but what a blessed thing it is! Proofs of the existence of God are altogether superfluous to those of us who are in the habit of conversing with the Eternal One. If anybody were to write an essay to prove the existence of my wife, or my son, I certainly should not read it, except for the amusement of the thing; and proofs of the existence of God to the man who communes with God are much the same. Many of you walk with God: what bliss! Fellowship with the Most High is elevating, purifying, strengthening. Enter into it boldly. Enter into his revealed thoughts, even as he graciously enters into yours: rise to his plans, as he condescends to yours; ask to be uplifted to him, even as he deigns to dwell with you.

This is what the rent of the veil brings us when we have boldness to enter in; but, mark you, the rent veil brings us nothing until we have boldness to enter in. Why stand we without? Jesus brings us near, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Let us not be slow to take up our freedom, and come boldly to the throne. The high priest entered within the veil of blue,

and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with blood, and with incense, that he might *pray for Israel;* and there he stood before the Most High, pleading with him to bless the people. O beloved, prayer is a divine institution, and it belongs to us. But there are many sorts of prayers. There is the prayer of one who seems shut out from God's holy temple; there is the prayer of another who stands in the court of the Gentiles afar off, looking towards the Temple; there is the prayer of one who gets where Israel stands and pleads with the God of the chosen; there is the prayer in the court of the priests, when the sanctified man of God makes intercession; but the best prayer of all is offered in the holiest of all. There is no fear about prayer being heard when it is offered in the holiest. The very position of the man proves that he is accepted with God. He is standing on the surest ground of acceptance, and he is so near to God that his every desire is heard. There the man is seen through and through; for he is very near to God. His thoughts are read, his tears are seen, his sighs are heard; for he has boldness to enter in. He may ask what he will, and it shall be done unto him. As the altar sanctifieth the gift, so the most holy place, entered by the blood of Jesus, secures a certain answer to the prayer that is offered therein. God give us such power in prayer! It is a wonderful thing that the Lord should hearken to the voice of a man; yet are there such men. Luther came out of his closet, and cried, *Vici*—"I have conquered." He had not yet met his adversaries; but as he had prevailed with God for men, he felt that he should prevail with men for God.

But the high priest, if you recollect, after he had communed and prayed with God, *came out and blessed the people.* He put on his garments of glory and beauty, which he had laid aside when he went into the holy place, for there he stood in simple white, and nothing else; and now he came out wearing the breast-plate and all his precious ornaments, and he blessed the people. That is what you will do if you have the boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus: you will bless the people that surround you. The Lord has blessed you, and he will make you a blessing. Your ordinary conduct and conversation will be a blessed example; the words you speak for Jesus will be like a dew from the Lord: the sick will be comforted by your words; the despondent will be encouraged by your faith; the lukewarm will be recovered by your love. You will be, practically, saying to each one who knows you, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and give thee peace." You will become a channel of blessing: "Out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water." May we each one have boldness to enter in, that we may come forth laden with benedictions!

If you will kindly look at the text, you will notice, what I shall merely hint at, that *this boldness is well grounded.* I always like to see the apostle using a "therefore": "Having *therefore* boldness." Paul is often a true poet, but he is always a correct logician; he is as logical as if he were dealing with mathematics rather than theology. Here he writes one of his therefores.

Why is it that we have boldness? Is it not because of our

relationship to Christ which makes us "brethren"? "Having therefore, *brethren*, boldness." The feeblest believer has as much right to enter into the holy place as Paul had; because he is one of the brotherhood. I remember a rhyme by John Ryland, in which he says of heaven—

> "They all shall be there, the great and the small;
> Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul."

I have no doubt we shall have such a position, and such fellowship. Meanwhile, we do shake hands with him this morning as he calls us brethren. We are brethren to one another, because we are brethren to Jesus. Where we see the apostle go, we will go; yea, rather, where we see the Great Apostle and High Priest of our profession enter, we will follow. "Having, therefore, boldness."

Beloved, we have now no fear of death in the most holy place. The high priest, whoever he might be, must always have dreaded that solemn day of atonement, when he had to pass into the silent and secluded place. I cannot tell whether it is true, but I have read that there is a tradition among the Jews, that a rope was fastened to the high priest's foot that they might draw out his corpse in case he died before the Lord. I should not wonder if their superstition devised such a thing, for it is an awful position for a man to enter into the secret dwelling of Jehovah. But we cannot die in the holy place now, since Jesus has died for us. The death of Jesus is the guarantee of the eternal life of all for whom he died. We have boldness to enter, for we shall not perish.

Our boldness arises from the perfection of his sacrifice. Read the fourteenth verse: "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." We rely upon the sacrifice of Christ, believing that he was such a perfect substitute for us, that it is not possible for us to die after our substitute has died; and we must be accepted, because he is accepted. We believe that the precious blood has so effectually and eternally put away sin from us, that we are no longer obnoxious to the wrath of God. We may safely stand where sin must be smitten, if there be any sin upon us; for we are so washed, so cleansed, and so fully justified that we are accepted in the Beloved. Sin is so completely lifted from us by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, that we have boldness to enter where Jehovah himself dwells.

Moreover, we have this for certain, that as a priest had a right to dwell near to God, we have that privilege; for Jesus hath made us kings and priests unto God, and all the privileges of the office come to us with the office itself. We have a mission within the holy place; we are called to enter there upon holy business, and so we have no fear of being intruders. A burglar may enter a house, but he does not enter with boldness; he is always afraid lest he should be surprised. You might enter a stranger's house, without an invitation, but you would feel no boldness there. We do not enter the holiest as housebreakers, nor as strangers; we come in obedience to a call, to fulfil our office. When once we accept the sacrifice of Christ, we are at home with God. Where should a child be bold but in his father's house? Where should a priest stand but in the temple of his God, for whose

service he is set apart? Where should a blood-washed sinner live but with his God, to whom he is reconciled?

It is a heavenly joy to feel this boldness! We have now such a love for God, and such a delight in him, that it never crosses our minds that we are trespassers when we draw near to him. We never say, "God, my dread," but "God, my exceeding joy." His name is the music to which our lives are set: though God be a consuming fire we love him as such, for he will only consume our dross, and that we desire to lose. Under no aspect is God now distasteful to us. We delight in him, be he what he may. So you see, beloved, we have good grounds for boldness when we enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

I cannot leave this point until I have reminded you that *we may have this boldness of entering in at all times*, because the veil is always rent, and is never restored to its old place. "The Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not;" but the Lord saith not so to us Dear child of God, you may at all times have "boldness to enter in." The veil is rent both day and night. Yea, let me say it, even when thine eye of faith is dim, still enter in; when evidences are dark, still have "boldness to enter in"; and even if thou hast unhappily sinned, remember that access is open to thy penitent prayer. Come still through the rent veil, sinner as thou art. What though thou hast backslidden, what though thou art grieved with the sense of thy wanderings, come even now! "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," but enter at once; for the veil is not there to exclude thee, though doubt and unbelief may make you think it is so. The veil cannot be there, for it was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

III. My time has fled, and I shall not have space to speak as I meant to do upon the last point—HOW WE EXERCISE THIS GRACE. Let me give you the notes of what I would have said.

Let us at this hour enter into the holiest. Behold the way! We come *by the way of atonement:* "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." I have been made to feel really ill through the fierce and blasphemous words that have been used of late by gentlemen of the modern school concerning the precious blood. I will not defile my lips by a repetition of the thrice-accursed things which they have dared to utter while trampling on the blood of Jesus. Everywhere throughout this divine Book you meet with the precious blood. How can he call himself a Christian who speaks in flippant and profane language of the blood of atonement? My brothers, there is no way into the holiest, even though the veil be rent, without blood. You might suppose that the high priest of old brought the blood because the veil was there; but *you* have to bring it with you though the veil is gone. The way is open, and you have boldness to enter; but not without the blood of Jesus. It would be an unholy boldness which would think of drawing near to God without the blood of the great Sacrifice. We have always to plead the atonement. As without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, so without that blood there is no access to God.

Next, the way by which we come is *an unfailing way.* Please notice that word—"by a *new* way"; this means by a way which is always fresh. The original Greek suggests the idea of "newly slain." Jesus died long ago, but his death is the same now as at the moment of its occurrence. We come to God, dear friends, by a way which is always effectual with God. It never, never loses one whit of its power and freshness.

"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power."

The way is not worn away by long traffic: it is always new. If Jesus Christ had died yesterday, would you not feel that you could plead his merit to-day? Very well, you can plead that merit after these nineteen centuries with as much confidence as at the first hour. The way to God is always newly laid. In effect, the wounds of Jesus incessantly bleed our expiation. The cross is as glorious as though he were still upon it. So far as the freshness, vigour, and force of the atoning death is concerned, we come by a new way. Let it be always new to our hearts. Let the doctrine of atonement never grow stale, but let it have dew upon it for our souls.

Then the apostle adds, it is a "*living way.*" A wonderful word! The way by which the high priest went into the holy place was of course a material way, and so a dead way. We come by a spiritual way, suitable to our spirits. The way could not help the high priest, but our way helps us abundantly. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, *and the life.*" When we come to God by this way, the way itself leads, guides, bears, brings us near. This way gives us life with which to come.

It is *a dedicated way:* "which he hath consecrated for us." When a new road is opened, it is set apart and dedicated for the public use. Sometimes a public building is opened by a king or a prince, and so is dedicated to its purpose. Beloved, the way to God through Jesus Christ is dedicated by Christ, and ordained by Christ for the use of poor believing sinners, such as we are. He has consecrated the way towards God, and dedicated it for us, that we may freely use it. Surely, if there is a road set apart for me, I may use it without fear; and the way to God and heaven through Jesus Christ is dedicated by the Saviour for sinners; it is the King's highway for wayfaring men, who are bound for the City of God; therefore, let us use it. "Consecrated for us"! Blessed word!

Lastly, it is *a Christly way*; for when we come to God, we still come through his flesh. There is no coming to Jehovah, except by the incarnate God. God in human flesh is our way to God; the substitutionary death of the Word made flesh is also the way to the Father. There is no coming to God, except by representation. Jesus represents us before God, and we come to God through him who is our covenant head, our representative and forerunner before the throne of the Most High. Let us never try to pray without Christ; never try to sing without Christ; never try to preach without Christ. Let us perform no holy function, nor attempt to have fellowship with God in any shape or way, except through that rent which he has made in the veil by his flesh, sanctified for us, and offered upon the cross on our behalf.

Beloved, I have done when I have just remarked upon the next two verses, which are necessary to complete the sense, but which I was obliged to omit this morning, since there would be no time to handle them. We are called to take holy freedoms with God. "Let us draw near," at once, "with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Let us do so boldly, for we have a great high priest. The twenty-first verse reminds us of this. Jesus is the great Priest, and we are the sub-priests under him, and since he bids us come near to God, and himself leads the way, let us follow him into the inner sanctuary. Because he lives, we shall live also. We shall not die in the holy place, unless he dies. God will not smite us unless he smites him. So, "having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

And then the apostle tells us that we may not only come with boldness, because our high priest leads the way, but because we ourselves are prepared for entrance. Two things the high priest had to do before he might enter: one was, to be sprinkled with blood, and this we have; for "our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience."

The other requisite for the priests was to have their "bodies washed with pure water." This we have received in symbol in our baptism, and in reality in the spiritual cleansing of regeneration. To us has been fulfilled the prayer—

> "Let the water and the blood
> From thy riven side which flowed,
> Be of sin the double cure,
> Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

We have known the washing of water by the Word, and we have been sanctified by the Spirit of his grace; therefore let us enter into the holiest. Why should we stay away? Hearts sprinkled with blood, bodies washed with pure water—these are the ordained preparations for acceptable entrance. Come near, beloved! May the Holy Spirit be the spirit of access to you now. Come to your God, and then abide with him! He is your Father, your all in all. Sit down and rejoice in him; take your fill of love; and let not your communion be broken between here and heaven. Why should it be? Why not begin to-day that sweet enjoyment of perfect reconciliation and delight in God which shall go on increasing in intensity until you behold the Lord in open vision, and go no more out? Heaven will bring a great change in condition, but not in our standing, if even now we stand within the veil. It will be only such a change as there is between the perfect day and the daybreak; for we have the same sun, and the same light from the sun, and the same privilege of walking in the light. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Division." Amen, and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews x.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—318, 296, 395.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JESUS AFFIRMED TO BE ALIVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 1ST, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."—Acts xxv. 18, 19.

FESTUS is giving to King Agrippa a brief account of the matter between Paul and the Jews. It may not be a very accurate account; for Festus did not profess to understand the business. He was a Roman governor newly come to Judæa; he had no acquaintance whatever with Jewish Scriptures nor with Jewish laws; he is, therefore, merely giving to King Agrippa a rough and ready outline of the affair as it struck him. He had never thought it worth his special attention, but he was a little puzzled how he should represent the matter to Cæsar, to whom Paul had appealed. Festus is represented by our translators as calling the Jewish religion a "superstition." I hardly think he would have used so harsh a term before Agrippa, who professed to be of the Jewish faith. But yet, as he probably knew that Agrippa's religion did not lie very deep, and was the mere appendage of a man of fashion, Festus was not very particular about the word which he used; and he lighted upon one which may mean "superstition" as the Authorized Version has it, or "religion" as the Revised Version has it. "Well, well," he seems to say to Agrippa, "I do not know much about it. I supposed, when the Jews brought this man before me, that he would be charged with a breach of the Roman law, and I was prepared, of course, to deal with the prisoner; but when I listened to their accusation, and found that there was nothing in it but some disputes about their religion, I hardly knew what to say. Their controversy is important to them, I dare say; but it can be of no consequence either to you or to me, for it turned very much upon a person of the name of Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."

I want you to notice that, rough and ready as this description is, and neither full nor deep, yet on the surface we see that in the controversy we have the same condition of things as we usually see in such conflicts. On the one side Paul's opponents fought with the

weapons of "certain questions," and on the other hand he defended himself with a bold affirmation. This is the old story of speculation against dogmatism. It is always the way: the adversaries of the cross of Christ assert nothing, but they question everything. They will not lay down a basis, nor define their opinions. If they would do this, we might soon demolish their fabrics of falsehood; but all that they propound is "certain questions." On the other hand, those who are witnesses for the Lord Jesus have little care about questions, speculations, and the boasted outcome of cultured thought; but they affirm certain definite facts: they affirm these to be a revelation from God, and there they stand. Brethren, it is, at least, a hopeful token when we are on the side of the affirmation. As to that side which is abundant only in questions, what can be the practical value of its contentions? Can ten thousand questions ease a guilty conscience? Can a myriad of speculations yield comfort for the dying hour? Are we helped forward in true holiness, or even converted to the way of life by questions? Let us take hold upon truths which are surely revealed, the things which we have tasted, and handled, and verified; and, holding these intelligently and heartily, let us resolve to hold them to the end. Let us accept that which has come to us by revelation of the Holy Ghost, and let us stand firmly therein, as Paul did when he affirmed that Jesus was yet alive. Let us plainly declare definite truth of which we are not ashamed—truth which is often disputed, but can never be disproved.

Another thing is very noticeable in this somewhat flippant account of the whole affair by Festus; namely, that he noticed that the Jews raised certain questions about opinions, superstitious or religious; but Paul made a statement concerning a person. Paul was seen with half an eye to be the more conscientious and the more religious of the two; but still his religion resolved itself into attachment to a person—"one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Brethren, the hinge of the controversy must ever turn upon our Lord, his divine nature, the authority of his teaching, and especially the meaning of his death and resurrection. Did he die as a sacrifice for sin according to Old Testament prophecy? Did he justify many by bearing their iniquities? Did he this, or did he not? The side which Paul takes is that which magnifies Jesus. He finds his chief treasure in the person of the Saviour. May the Spirit of God lead us more and more to contend for Jesus, who is not only the Author and Finisher of our faith, but the sum and substance of it! Son of God, and yet Son of man; eternal, yet born into this world; our Sacrifice, and yet our Prophet, Priest and King; bearer of our sorrow and fountain of our joy; sacrifice for our transgression, and yet source of our righteousness; Jesus Christ is our all in all! God forbid that we should glory save in his cross, for we preach Christ crucified. God forbid that we should ever despair of his triumph; for we affirm that he is alive, able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by him. Oh for a deeper love to our Lord himself, loving doctrine, precept, and ordinance for his dear sake; rejoicing most of all that he liveth, since because he lives we shall live also. May even the blindest observer of our lives be forced to see that Jesus

holds the most prominent place in them, and that the battle of our existence is for Jesus, our living Lord!

We will give more consideration this morning to the words of Festus than he gave to them himself. May the Spirit of God give us a blessing while we review this superficial utterance of an utterly worldly man! Seen in its true light, it may be instructive to us.

First, let us observe that *true gospel preaching is full of Jesus.* Paul spoke so much of him that an irreligious heathen magistrate perceived that he spoke of "one Jesus." Secondly, note that *gospel preaching makes much of the resurrection;* for this is implied in what Festus says of Paul's affirmation; and, thirdly, *gospel preaching affirms that Jesus who died is alive.* The great contention was concerning "one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."

I. To begin with: TRUE GOSPEL PREACHING IS FULL OF JESUS. Jesus is the most notable figure in Christian testimony. The apostle Paul, whom we may regard as a model in preaching, exercised a ministry which was always full of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Following the historical connection of the verse before us, we note that *he preached "Jesus to multitudes unknown."* Festus evidently knew not Jesus, for he speaks of him as "one Jesus." He mentions the name as belonging to some obscure individual of whom he knew nothing, and cared less. The great ones of the earth know nothing of the King of kings. Beloved, to this day this is the wonder of wonders, that the incarnate God is not known. The world which he made knows him not. He came at first to his own nation, who had been studying the prophecies concerning him. Even to the jots and tittles had they studied those prophecies, and yet, when he came who was the clear fulfilment of them all, they knew him not; for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. When he was born into the world, there was no room for him in the inn, where there is room for everybody. No palace gave welcome to the more than royal child. He was of the house and lineage of David, but they did not perceive in him the answer to their question, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" His birth is the starting-point of the age; and yet it was almost unanimously ignored by those who wielded the recording pen of history. His was the most extraordinary life that ever passed before mortal eyes; and yet how little notice was taken of it! Beyond Palestine it seems not even to have awakened curiosity. He died, and then to the people most concerned in him he became "one Jesus, which was dead." The new Roman procurator, and myriads like him, well informed upon other matters, hardly knew his name, and only mentioned half of it when they spoke of "one Jesus, which was dead." Brethren, this is why we must keep on preaching Jesus Christ, because he is still so little known. The masses of this city are as ignorant of Jesus as Festus was. You can never have a congregation in any of our places of worship and feel sure that they all know Jesus. If you gather in the outsiders from the street you may be sure that the story of Jesus will be news to them. We call this a Christian country; but it would be very difficult to prove that it is so. If we took certain lines of observation as to the moral and religious conduct

of our fellow-men, we should logically arrive at the conclusion that we live in a heathen rather than in a Christian city. Still the world knoweth him not. As a sun he shines on all eyes, and yet men do not see him; as an atmosphere he surrounds all life, and yet men do not perceive him. Let this sad fact constrain us to fill our teaching with Christ. As Gideon's fleece dripped with dew, so let us saturate our ministry with Christ. Be it ours truthfully to say, "We preach Christ crucified." We do this always, and evermore; not by accident, but by continual design.

Paul preached *Jesus, who was despised by many*. The language of Festus is not only that of ignorance, but in a measure that of contempt. He speaks of "one Jesus, which was dead." Jesus is evidently nothing to Festus, and Festus does not imagine that Jesus is very much to King Agrippa. Probably he was quite right: Jesus was nobody among the rank and fashion and culture of the period. Behold the unlearned of the day, if you speak to them of the great Sacrifice and the wondrous atonement made by blood, they scarcely hearken to you, for such high things are not for them: they are so hardly pressed with daily labour and slender pay that they cannot think of sin, and sacrifice, and salvation; but they ask, "What has the poor working man to do with religion?" Alas, that this folly should be so prevalent! Then you turn to the learned, and hope that here, at any rate, due attention will be given to the great marvel of reconciling love. Alas! it is not so. To these more educated ones the doctrine of the cross is foolishness. They ask for something new; something more philosophical. Substitution and sacrifice—they will have none of them. The story of the league of justice with grace, the reconcilement of holiness with mercy, is beneath their notice. They are too cultured to believe the common faith, too wise to accept that which God hath revealed unto babes. Beloved brethren, it should never cause us doubt when we see many despising our Lord, for this is nothing new, and nothing unexpected. Did he tell us that if we preached in his name all men would receive us? Nay, he warned us that the contrary result would follow. Did not his apostles assure us that the offence of the cross had not ceased? Is not Christ crucified a stumbling-block and foolishness to carnal men? If all men had received our message with a ready gratitude, we might have questioned the truth of Scripture; but inasmuch as they fight against it, we may see in this an argument for its truth, since we were told of old that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him."

Gospel preaching is also full of Jesus Christ in this respect, that *we do not conceal his death*. Festus notes that the conflict was concerning "one Jesus, which was dead." The Jews said he was dead, and Paul also confessed that he was dead: there was no disagreement between them over that matter. Hear, then, the debate. "What! did your Leader die?" "Yes: he was crucified." "Did you not say he was divine?" "Yes." "Yet is he dead?" "It is even so." "Yet you spoke of his leading you on to victory?" "So we did." "Yet he is dead?" "Yes, he died at Calvary." "How, then, can your boasting stand?" "We believe that by his death he has gained the

victory and accomplished his great purpose." "But how did he die?" He died the death of a felon upon a gibbet. His enemies nailed him to a cross, and put him to a death which was reserved for slaves. We confess this; yea, we glory in it! We tell you, too, that he not only died that which was a penal death externally, but he actually and truly died such a death. "He was made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." Isaiah said of him, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," and again, "He was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many." His death was the equivalent to that penal death which was our just desert. Hear how he cries: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." We glory that our Lord Jesus was put to death as bearing the sin of many. This we hold and teach; not defending it, nor apologizing for it; but affirming it with all boldness, with the desire that we may be understood. If any cavil at this teaching, we do not therefore conceal it; we expected that it would be cavilled at. We desire more and more to obtrude this truth of substitution whenever we preach, and to make it the head and front of our gospel. As the brazen serpent was lifted up upon the pole, and was by no means concealed, even so would we set forth plainly the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus, that sinners may look to him and live. This is the hope of men—the sacrifice of Jesus proclaimed with great plainness of speech. Jesus is to be believed in as the sin-bearing Lamb of God; believed in as dying the death of the cross, that we might live through him. That only is gospel preaching which has this for its subject and spirit. A Christless gospel is a useless gospel. Our sermons should be so perfumed with Jesus that never should a congregation gather and separate without perceiving a savour of Christ. Even people who are not saved by it should yet be made to know that we preach Christ crucified. In such a case, we have done our work successfully, even if souls are not saved; for we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, as well in them that perish as in them that are saved, if we have exalted the Lord Jesus, and borne witness to his power to save.

Beloved, I would have you further note that *true gospel preaching will be full of Jesus as he is revealed in the Old Testament.* Our apostle, when he spake before King Agrippa, went on to declare that he had said "none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." Evidently it was this astounding statement about Jesus having risen from the dead and being yet alive that was uppermost in the mind of Festus, so that when Paul re-asserted it, he cried with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." The learning he referred to was his study of the ancient books of the Jews, the writings of Moses and the prophets. Paul's teaching paid as much deference to the ancient Scriptures as did that of the Jewish rabbis who were opposed to him; nay, in very truth he paid a far more real homage to the Bible than

they did. As for us, the Old Testament is prized by us as much as the New. We do not preach Jesus as a fresh arrival, the inventor of a new religion, the founder of a novel way of salvation. No; we preach the Messiah of the Old Testament, whose gospel is set forth in the types and in the teachings of Moses and the prophets: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Do not imagine that the religion of Abraham was one thing and ours another: ours is but the continuation of that gospel which was revealed to all the faithful from the days of righteous Abel until now. All who have spoken in the name of God have borne witness to the same truth. If you would see a suffering Saviour I need not refer you to the gospels, but in the twenty-second Psalm behold the full-length portrait of Messiah in his agony. Hear him cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark how they part his garments among them, and cast lots upon his vesture, after they have pierced his hands and his feet! No evangelist, even though he were an eye-witness, could have drawn the picture more to the life. Read also the fifty-third of Isaiah. Where can you find a better description of the Messiah's sufferings than when you see him cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of his people? Beloved, the New Testament is the key to the Old, but the lock is not superseded by the key—nay, it is made more useful. We have not received a new religion: we worship the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, for he is the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our gospel hath threads of many colours in it: both the Old and New Testaments are set forth in it to the glory of the one Christ who is the sole revelation of God. Every gospel sermon should set forth Jesus scripturally; for it is not the Christ of fancy, but the Christ of fact that saves the souls of men.

Let me add that *where the gospel is faithfully preached the reproach of Christ will not be shunned by the preacher.* Read in the fifth verse of the twenty-fourth of Acts how Paul won this reproach. His adversaries said: "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." This was the reputation of Paul. Well did Mr. Whitefield say, "There is no going to heaven as a minister except in a fool's cap and a fool's coat." There is no hope of preaching Christ faithfully without being called by disrespectful titles, regarded as a fool, and reckoned among the vulgar and ignorant. Some kind of ugly name will always be appended to the gospeller. Brethren, expect it, and accept it! Bid farewell to a quiet life, if you resolve to be true to Jesus. Nothing excites such animosity as the preaching of Jesus. The carnal mind rages at the cross of Christ. That which would be to men the greatest comfort and the greatest joy if they were in their right minds, is their direst hate because sin has perverted their judgments. Do not, I beseech you, imagine that it is possible, fairly and squarely, to preach Jesus Christ and his gospel without raising opposition. I know a minister of whom one said, "He is a truly good man, and nobody ever says a word against him." Upon enquiry I heard a judicious person say, "He preaches no error,

but he avoids the obnoxious side of truth. What he preaches is true enough, no doubt, but it is not easy to say what it is. Nine out of ten of his hearers could not say what his precise opinion may be, but he has a fine flow of words. Those who do know what he is preaching about usually say that, take it for all in all, there is nothing in it." Of course nobody opposes an indistinct, colourless, please-everybody gospel: it is not worth while. But speak clearly and distinctly the doctrine of the great Sacrifice, and you will bring upon your head a shower of opposition: you will be "a pestilent fellow" and "a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes." Gospel preaching does not cry, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace; but it is the sword which the Lord Jesus came to send upon the earth.

Once more. *Jesus Christ must be preached in the gospel as the sum and substance of it all;* for we note concerning Paul, in this connection, that whoever might be his hearer, his theme was the same: he preached unto them Jesus. If he speaks to Felix, he does not only preach to him of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," as some remind us; but in the twenty-fourth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter we are told that "after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ." The faith in Christ was the first thing that Paul preached, and then he "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." The foundation of Christian morality is Christ himself; and though we do preach moral duties most earnestly, and press them home upon the conscience, yet first of all we preach the faith of Jesus Christ. When Paul spoke to Festus in the twenty-sixth chapter at the twenty-third verse, he told him that "Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead." It was this that made Festus cry out, because he was amazed at this strange truth concerning Jesus. So was it with Agrippa. Agrippa is forced to feel that Paul is preaching Christ, for he cries, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Paul did not merely persuade him to justice and righteousness, but he pressed him to yield himself to Christ. Indeed the whole of Paul's address goes to prove the power and glory of the Jesus by whom Paul had been called to be an apostle. Now, beloved, as I resolve, God helping me, in my preaching to preach to you nothing else save Jesus Christ, so I beseech you, in your schools, in your families, in your public ministries of any and every kind, begin and end with Jesus, who was dead and is alive. Declare his blessed name, and proclaim the glory of his cross! God forbid that you should place anything in front of your testimony save Jesus crucified! Your gospel is a golden frame, let Jesus be the portrait which is hung up in it.

II. Secondly: GOSPEL PREACHING AFFIRMS THE RESURRECTION.

Please notice, that *Paul did not argue the resurrection, but affirmed it.* He did not prove it philosophically, but he affirmed that Jesus rose from the dead, because such and such persons saw him alive after he had risen. He did not merely say that it was probable, that it was possible, that it was reasonable, but that it was so, for witnesses proved it. Two saw him, eleven saw him, four hundred saw him. He dealt with the resurrection as common-sense persons deal with any

other fact of history; he quoted his authorities, and affirmed that it was so. His witnesses were honest and true men, who dared to go to prison, and even to die on account of their statements. They had nothing whatever to gain, and everything to lose by their testimonies. They stated that Jesus, whom they knew to have been dead, had risen again, and had given clear proofs that he was alive. This corner-stone of our faith is sure, and upon the certainty of it we build our faith.

Paul asserted that the Saviour had the pre-eminence in resurrection, and "that he should be the first that should rise from the dead." Several persons rose from the dead before our Saviour, but not in the sense which Paul intended. Those mentioned in the Old Testament were quickened for a time, but they died after all, and saw corruption. They lived anew, but they lived not evermore, as Jesus doth. A miracle was wrought, but it gave them only a temporary prolongation of life; they went back to the grave again in due time. Whether it was the child of the woman in the Old Testament, or the brother of Mary and Martha in the New, they were not so raised from the dead as to have attained to immortality. But our Saviour finally rose from the dead, and rose from the dead by his own power. He was the first-fruits of the resurrection harvest. He was the first sheaf of that wheat which will one day be gathered in bulk: he was the first-fruits to be presented unto the Lord to sanctify the whole. Jesus is the pattern, the proof, the pledge, the earnest, the guarantee of the resurrection of all the rest. This Paul asserted and declared as a revelation of God.

From this he inferred the general resurrection. He says in another place, that if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen, and the whole faith of the gospel falls to the ground. To you and to me this is full of comfort: the dead must rise. Our beloved ones have been taken from us, but they shall come again from the land of the enemy. We have a glorious hope concerning our own bodies. "I know that my Redeemer liveth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." We shall rise, for Jesus has risen. This is the constant assertion of Scripture. There would be no proof of the resurrection of the dead if Jesus had not risen; but as he has risen from the dead, our resurrection is secured. Now has death lost its sting: the grave may receive us, but it cannot retain us, since Jesus has burst its bars.

Moreover, *Paul*—and he, I say, is a model among gospel preachers—*teaches us to preach in our gospel all the sweet inferences which flow from the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.* Here they are. He rose from the dead, and therefore his sacrifice has been accepted. God has brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant. The work he has done has pleased the Father, and therefore he has brought him back from among the dead. His acceptance is ours: we are "accepted in the Beloved."

Next, Jesus himself is clear. He had, as our sponsor, become our hostage. Sin was laid on him, and he was laid in the grave; but now the sinner's surety is as clear as the sinner himself: for the Lord

Jesus is released from the prison of the tomb. He was delivered for our offences, but he rose again for our justification.

Now, also, we live unto God. Our Lord Jesus died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God: so is it with us. This is our joy: his work is accepted, his bearing of our curse is finished, life in us is made manifest.

And now, beloved, we see in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that he is divine. He is "declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." So says Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Jesus raised himself from the dead by his own will. "I have power to lay down my life," said he, "and I have power to take it again." Who could possess and exercise such a power but a divine being?

I must repeat what I have said already, that from the resurrection of our Lord we draw the comfortable inference of the resurrection unto eternal life of all who are in Christ. We said farewell, a little while ago, to him whom we loved so well, but we shall see the honoured one again. We laid our sister in the grave with many tears. Oh, how we miss her! But we shall meet her again when the trumpet shall sound. We preserve a long list of departed ones, of which we scarcely dare to think, for tears drown our eyes; yet will we refrain from weeping, for as the dew of herbs causes them to spring up again, so the rising again of our Lord restores to us the beloved ones who have fallen asleep. The broken circle of our fellowship shall be renewed, for Jesus, its centre, has risen again.

III. But now, alas for me! I have scant time for the point which I wanted most fully to discuss—GOSPEL PREACHING AFFIRMS THAT JESUS IS ALIVE. We do not preach to you a dead Christ, but one who is able to save to the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth.

Jesus died, Jesus rose again, Jesus is now alive. Paul knew that Jesus lived, for he had spoken to him out of heaven. Paul had both seen and heard the Lord Jesus, and thus he had been turned from a persecutor into an apostle. *We* do not need to see Jesus, nor to hear his voice, for we are well satisfied with the witness of a man so true as Paul, in whom a change so remarkable was wrought by what he saw. His entire being was transformed by what he saw and heard; assuredly he was no deceiver, and he was not the sort of person to have been deceived. Jesus Christ is then alive, for Paul saw him.

Nay, not only once did he see him, but on several other occasions. He saw the Lord when he was in the temple in a trance, and heard him say, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." (Acts xxii. 17–21.) Even when he lay in prison in Jerusalem the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." Jesus had thus spoken to Paul, once, twice, and many times; and so he was to him most assuredly alive. Ah, dear friends! if the Lord Jesus has had gracious dealings with any one of us, and we have had him revealed within us, we also shall affirm that he is alive.

Beloved, receiving the witness of our apostle, and remembering many other infallible proofs which we have not time to mention, we also believe that Jesus, who was dead, is alive. What follows from this?

Why, first, He is alive *to bestow the Holy Spirit.* Many blessings come from our Lord's death, but the Holy Spirit was an early gift of his resurrection life: especially was it the outcome of his ascended life. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the ascension gift of our living Lord. When we think of his resurrection life, we couple with it the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Oh, that this same Spirit would work among us more manifestly just now! And why not? He is with us because Jesus lives. No Spirit of life could proceed from a dead Christ. Jesus, if he were not alive, could not send the Comforter to us. The life, and light, and liberty of the Spirit are with us, because Jesus lives. Beloved, do you think the times are dark and dreary? Be not afraid: while Jesus lives the Holy Spirit is always obtainable, the Holy Spirit is always ready to work in and with us. What more do we want? Error will fall, and truth will be established by the Holy Ghost. This is our battle-axe and weapon of war. O living Christ, we praise and bless thy name; for out of thee shall come abundance of life and power through thy Spirit!

Jesus is alive. Dwell on that thought. He is alive, *to claim heaven for his redeemed.* He has gone up before us to occupy our inheritance for us. When he first put his feet within the golden gate he took possession of eternal glory for every soul that he represents. He is our forerunner and representative. Brethren, heaven is yours, heaven is mine, because Jesus is "the man in possession" on our behalf. That pierced hand has taken hold of eternal bliss on the behalf of those for whom he shed his blood.

Jesus is also in heaven *making preparation for our coming.* What has to be done to make heaven ready I am sure I do not know, though I have often tried to guess; but Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you." Heaven, when we get there, will prove to be the exact place for us. It has taken Jesus all these years to make it ready for us. He that with a word made earth fit for created man, did not with a word make heaven fit for his regenerated, but went to heaven himself as a living Christ to see everything set in order for them. I think I hear him say, "This will not do for my beloved. There is something yet needed. These fruits are not quite mellow enough, these flowers are not full-blown enough for my beloved, whom I desire to entertain to the utmost of their capacity." Jesus is living—living on purpose to keep heaven for us, and make it in all respects ready for us.

Futhermore, lay hold of this thought, that Jesus is alive *to intercede for us.* I am most rich, beloved, when I have your prayers. If I might have a part in the prayers of all the saints on earth I would not envy a Kaiser his dominions. Yet what are all the prayers of saints compared with the prayers of the King of saints? When he prays—he of the pierced hands and feet, when he prays whom the Father loves so well, who has such deservings of Jehovah for his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross—what a prevalence must dwell in his intercession! We trust not in a dumb, dead Christ, who could not speak for us, but we rest in an advocate whose eloquent pleadings before the throne of God can never be denied.

Observe also that our Lord lives *to rule all things on our behalf.* His enemies put him to an ignominious death, but the Father hath

delivered all things into his hand. He whom they spat upon wears majesty in his face. The despised and rejected of men has all power in heaven and in earth. Jesus lives to control all events, and overrule them for the highest purposes of grace. Trust ye in him, for his kingdom cannot fail, neither can anything go amiss while he is to the front. Paul affirmed that he was alive; and alive he is in the fullest sense, so that nothing escapes his government. Hallelujah!

"Ah!" say you, "you have now put him far away from us by reason of his adorable majesty." Then let me bring him near to you. He is not only alive Godward, that the Father may delight in him, but alive towards you, *that he may have the fellowship of kinship with you.* He is touched with a feeling of your infirmities. He sympathizes with all your griefs, even as a loving husband shares the pangs and sorrows of his spouse. He is most near to you, for he is one with you. We may not think of our Lord as of one whose shadow flitted over the historic page, and left a faint photographic trace; but he lives as truly in the present as in the past. He is not Jesus of the mist, but of this day's light. He is the same in heart, the same in tenderness, the same in living feeling and union as ever he was. Did you ever reflect that something of Christ remained on earth, and was not taken to heaven? I mean those drops of blood which fell from him in Gethsemane, and that other stream which gushed from his pierced heart on Calvary. I see that his heart's essence is with us still. It was after death that his heart poured forth for us its treasure of water and blood; and now, long after death, his whole heart is as truly ours as it was when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree.

O child of God, I would have you further remember that Jesus is still alive *to commune with you.* You bend not over his corpse, but you sit at his feet. Carnal men would think me dreaming if I were to tell of our spiritual intercourse with our living Lord. Still doth he speak to our hearts. Pearls may not be cast before swine, nor the love secrets of our souls declared in the streets; but we have been conscious at times of influences other than those which are natural and common. Jesus has made himself known to us: he has stood behind us, and his shadow has fallen over us. He has manifested himself to us as he does not to the world. Many a time has he cast a spell over us, and bathed us in mystic influence. We have been raised from the valley of weeping to the mountains of joy by a word from himself laid home to the heart. You know what I mean. Jesus does not forget us. He has not allowed a great gulf to open between us and himself. He is still the loving, living, active Jesus to us and with us.

How I wish that every child of God here who is in trouble would go at once with that trouble to the living Christ! Oh, that every sinner who is crushed beneath his load of sin would bow at once before the living Christ, whose voice speaks pardon! You cannot perceive Jesus, but he is present where his gospel is preached. Eye cannot see him, nor hand touch him, but he is visible and tangible to faith. Bow before him. I know you have often thought, "If, instead of seeing Mr. Spurgeon on the platform, I could see Jesus, I would confess my sin to him, and ask his pardon." I pray you do so even though you see

him not, *for he sees you.* Fain would I cease to be seen of you, that your hearts might see my Lord, for he is here. Bow before him, confess to him, and trust him. "Oh!" cries a loving one, "if Jesus were visibly here, I would take him home with me and entertain him." Do so, I pray you, though you do not see him. Constrain him to abide with you. Treat the Lord Jesus, not as a phantom, but as a real Christ. Paul affirmed that he was alive, believe Paul's affirmation, and speak to the living Jesus. I will give you a text:—"Whom having not seen, ye love." You cannot love a dead person as a dead person. You may love the memory of the dead; but if you love them, you regard them as living. Love is for life; it cannot dwell with death. We have not seen Jesus, but we love him, and this proves that to our hearts he lives.

Let us view him in the light of life at this very hour. I beseech my Lord Jesus to let me personally realize his august presence. My Lord, art thou really here? Hear, then, my prayer: I beseech thee, enable me to serve thee with my whole being, and to count reproach for thy sake to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. Will you not, my beloved, each one of you, think of your Lord as with you at this moment? Behold him, and speak to him in the silence of your hearts. Will you not renew your dedication vow, and be the Lord's for ever?

Oh that our Lord would now appear! Oh that his silver trumpets would ring out while yet I speak to you! Oh that his feet would once more touch this earth! The second coming of our living Lord is the ultimatum of our faith. He is alive, and as surely as he lives, he will open wide the golden gate, and come again to take his people up to be with him for ever. Has he not said, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself"? They that have been faithful to him in this evil generation, through the dark as well as through the light, and have followed at his heel through mire and slough—these shall partake of his glory. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Who is on the side of the living Christ at this hour? Let him come out and boldly say so. Hold not back lest ye be found traitors. Confess your Lord, take up your cross, and be the living servants of the living Jesus. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts xxvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—306, 326, 336.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"DAVID'S SPOIL."

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 15TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"This is David's spoil."—1 Samuel xxx. 20.

WE have aforetime gathered spoil for ourselves out of David's behaviour in the hour of his sorrow at Ziklag, and we will now turn to the other side of this leaf in his history, and receive instruction from the time of his victory. But we must not do this till we have refreshed our memories with the story of his conduct under distress. When he came to the city he found it burned with fire, the property of himself and his comrades carried away, and, what was worse, all their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, gone into captivity. In the madness of their grief the people turned upon their leader, as if he had led them into this calamity. He was the only calm person among them, for he "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." With due deliberation he waited upon the Lord, and consulted the oracle through the appointed priest, and then, under divine guidance, he pursued the banditti, took them at unawares, recovered all his people's goods, and captured a large booty which the Amalekites had collected elsewhere. David, who had been the chief object of the people's mutiny, and the leader of the successful pursuit of the robbers, most properly received a special portion of the spoil, and concerning it the words of our text were spoken, "This is David's spoil."

We shall now look into this victorious act on the part of David with the view of finding spiritual teaching in it. David may be regarded as a very special type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Among the personal types David holds a leading place, for in so many points he is the prophetic foreshadowing of the great and glorious Son of David. Whenever David acts as the man after God's own heart, he is the picture and emblem of the One who is still more after God's own heart, even the Christ of God. David, under divine guidance, pursued the Amalekites, who had come as thieves to smite and to burn, and carry away captive. The marauders were overtaken and slaughtered, and a great spoil was the result. David recovered all that the Amalekites had

taken. "And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor anything that they had taken to them: David recovered all." We are told several times over in the chapter that nothing was lacking: "David recovered all." When our Lord Jesus wrought out our redemption, he recovered all, and left nothing in the enemy's hand. All glory to his name! But over and above, David took great store of cattle, and jewels, and gold, and silver, and so forth, which belonged to the Amalekites, and out of this a bountiful portion was taken which was set apart as David's spoil. David's men, in the moment of their despair, had spoken of stoning him; but now, in the morning of their victory, with general acclamations, they determine that David shall have, as his portion of the spoil, all the cattle which belong to the Amalekites themselves; and so, driving these in front, as they return to Ziklag, they say, "This is David's spoil." I think I hear them, as they drive the bullocks and the sheep before them, shouting right lustily, "This is David's spoil."

Now, using David as the type of Christ, I want, if I can, to set all David's men—all Christ's men—shouting with all their hearts, "This is Jesus' spoil!" He it is of whom Jehovah saith, "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." He has a grand reward as the result of the great battle of his life and death. We will even now award to him the spoil, and cry, "This is David's spoil"; feeling, all the while, as the Psalmist did, when he said, "Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey."

I. We begin with the first observation that, practically, all the spoil of that day was David's spoil, and in truth, ALL THE GOOD THAT WE ENJOY COMES TO US THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS. He has been given as a Leader and a Commander to the people, and every victory they win is due to him, and to him alone. Without him we can *do* nothing, and without him we can *obtain* nothing. All that we once possessed by nature, and under the law, the spoiler has taken away. By our own efforts we can never regain what we have lost; only through our great Leader can we be restored and made happy. We ascribe unto Jesus all our gains, even as David's men honoured their captain.

For, first, David's men defeated the Amalekites, and took their spoil, but *it was for David's sake that God gave success to the band.* God's eye rested upon his chosen servant, the Lord's anointed, and it was not for the warriors' own sakes, but for David's sake, that God guided them to the hosts of Amalek, and gave them like driven stubble to their sword. How much more true it is to us that every blessing, every pardoning mercy, every delivering mercy, is given to us through him who is our shield and God's anointed! It is for the sake of Jesus that we are pardoned, justified, accepted, preserved, sanctified. Only through this channel does the mercy of God come to us. The Lord God saith, "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel! Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways"; and we, in response to that, can answer, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto the name of the Well-beloved be praise, and honour, and glory, for ever and ever!" Since everything comes to us because of Christ Jesus, we may say of every covenant mercy, "This is David's spoil." On this blessing, and on that favour, yea, on them all, we see the mark of the cross. These are all fruits of

our Redeemer's passion, the purchase of his blood. Again we say with gratitude, "This is David's spoil."

Moreover, *David's men gained the victory over Amalek because of David's leadership.* If he had not been there to lead them to the fight, in the moment of their despair they would have lost all heart, and would have remained amidst the burning walls of Ziklag a discomfited company. But David encouraged himself in the Lord, and so encouraged all his desponding followers. Drawing his sword, and marching in front, he put spirit into them: they all followed with eager step because their gallant leader so courageously led the way. This is exactly our case, beloved, only we are even more indebted to our Lord Jesus than these men were to David. The Lord Jesus Christ has been here among us, and has fought our battle for us, and recovered all that we had lost by Adam's fall and by our own sin. It is written of him, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." You know how he set his face like a flint, how stout-hearted he was to accomplish the work of our redemption, and how he ceased not till he could cry victoriously, "It is finished."

> "Our glorious Leader claims our praise
> For his own pattern given."

Following at his feet we, too, fight with sin. Treading in his footsteps we, too, overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Have you never heard him say, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"? And you, dear brothers and sisters, whatever victories you win, whatever spoils you divide, will own that it is through Jesus that you have conquered. They said of Waterloo that it was a soldiers' battle, and the victory was due to the men; but ours is our Commander's battle, and every victory won by us is due to the great Captain of our salvation. Let the crown be set upon his head, even on the battle-field, and let us say of every sin that we have overcome, every evil habit that we have destroyed, "This is David's spoil." We had never won this victory if Jesus had not led us: we have it for his sake. We have it under his leadership. Without exception, all the saints on earth and in heaven confess this to be true.

> "I ask them whence their victory came?
> They, with united breath,
> Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
> Their triumph to his death.
>
> They mark'd the footsteps that he trod,
> His zeal inspired their breast,
> And, following their incarnate God,
> Possess the promised rest."

I will not say more upon this point, but only ask you to remember that by nature we had all lost everything. We lost the garden with all its Paradisiacal joys; lost this world, the very earth bringing forth thorns and thistles to us; lost life, lost hope, lost peace, lost the favour of God. But Jesus has recovered all. All that the first Adam lost the second Adam has restored. David recovered all, and Jesus has recovered all. We ourselves were lost; but Jesus has brought us back from the hand of the enemy. He has given us ourselves, if I may

use such an expression, and now we who were dead are alive again, the lost are found. Once, every faculty of ours was being used for our own destruction, but now, sanctified by the grace of God, all is being used for God's glory, and for our own ripening and perfecting. Jesus has recovered us for ourselves and for our God: the prey has been taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive has been delivered.

Yes, and our Lord Jesus has recovered for us the future as well as the past. Our outlook was grim and dark indeed till Jesus came; but oh, how bright it is now that he has completed his glorious work! Death is no more the dreaded grave of all our hopes. Hell exists no longer for believers. Heaven, whose gates were closed, is now set wide open to every soul that believeth. We have recovered life and immortal bliss. We are snatched like brands from the burning, and made to shine like lamps of the palace of the great King. We are set up to be for ever trophies of the conquering power of Jesus, our glorious David. Look at all the saints in heaven in their serried ranks, and say of them all, "This is David's spoil." Look at the blood-bought church of God on earth—the ten thousands that are already washed in his blood, and following at his feet—we may say of all this ransomed flock, "This is David's spoil." Each one of us, looking at himself, and all his past, and all his future, may say, "This, too, is David's spoil." Christ has done it, done it all, and unto his name let the whole host shout the victory.

I feel as if I could stop the sermon, and ask you to sing, but it will be better if I content myself with repeating the hymn—

"Rejoice, ye shining worlds on high,
Behold the King of glory nigh!
He comes adorned with victory,
He made our foes before him flee.

"Ye heavenly gates, your leaves display,
To make the Lord the Saviour way!
Laden with spoils from earth and hell,
The Conqueror comes with God to dwell.

"Raised from the dead, he goes before;
He opens heaven's eternal door:
To give his saints a blest abode,
Near their Redeemer and their God."

II. But the most interesting part of our subject is this: all the booty was practically David's spoil, but there was a part of it which was not recovered, but was a clear gain. They recovered all they had lost, and over and above there was a surplus of spoil from the defeated foe. Now, in the great battle of Christ on our behalf, he has not only given us back what we lost, but he has given us what Adam in his perfection never had. And I want you to dwell upon that, because this part of it is peculiarly our Lord's spoil. THOSE GOOD THINGS WHICH WE NOW POSSESS, OVER AND ABOVE WHAT WE LOST BY SIN, COME TO US BY THE LORD JESUS. Now that the Son of God has come into the field, he is not content with restoration, he turns the loss into a gain, the fall into a greater rising.

And first, dear friends, think: *In Christ Jesus human nature is lifted*

up where it never could have been before. Man was made in his innocence to occupy a very lofty place. "Thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." Man would have enjoyed that dominion had he never fallen, but he never could have obtained what he has now gained, for "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." And we see in Jesus human nature joined in mysterious union with the Godhead. I never know how to speak about this miracle of the divine incarnation. We are men and women, poor creatures at our very best; yet in Christ Jesus our dignity is perfectly amazing. Angels excel in strength and beauty, but no angel was ever joined to the Godhead as manhood is now united to God. The nearest being to God is a man. The noblest existence—how shall I word it?—the noblest of all beings is God, and the God-man Christ Jesus, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, is with him upon his throne. It is a wondrous honour this—that manhood should be taken into intimate connection, yea, absolute union with God! For listen: through Jesus Christ we are this day made the sons of God, which angels never were. "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son?" But he has said this to us. Christ took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham, and he has made the believing seed of Abraham to be the sons of God. Listen again: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God." God's heirs! What a word is this! How simple, but how sublime! I know how to say it, but not how to expound it! It does not want explanation, and yet its depths are fathomless. Every believer is God's heir—the heir of God. Could this have been, had there been no fall and no redemption? Children and heirs are more than was ever spoken of in Eden. Ay, listen yet again. Now we are one with God in Christ Jesus; for it is written concerning our Lord, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Close as the marriage-union is, yet Paul declared, when he spake of it, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Unfallen manhood was never declared to be one with the Son of God, and yet through the covenant of grace this is our position. We are joined by vital, real, conjugal union to Jesus Christ the Son of the Highest, very God of very God; and this is an elevation so transcendent that I feel bowed down beneath the weight of glory which is revealed in us. The most glorious being next to God is man. A sinner most shameful once, but now in Christ a child accepted and honoured! What can I say of this but "This is David's spoil"? This is what Jesus brought us. It came to us by no other way or method. Neither do we know in what way or method it could have been given to us, but by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is given to us through Jesus Christ, our elder Brother and our covenant Head, and unto him let the glory of it be ascribed world without end.

Another blessing which was not ours before the fall, and therefore never was lost, but comes to us as a surplusage, is *the fact that we are redeemed.* You sang just now that verse,

> "Never did angels taste above
> Redeeming grace and dying love."

It is clear that you could never have known free grace and dying love if Jesus had not come to redeem you. Unfallen intelligent spirits will say in eternity, "Do you see those beings bowing nearest to the eternal throne? Do you see those well-beloved creatures? Who are they?" Spirits that have lived in other worlds will come crowding up to the great metropolis, and will say one to another, "Who are those courtiers—those that dwell nearest to God? Who are they?" And one spirit will say to another, "They are beings whom God not only made as he made us, but whom the eternal Son of God redeemed by blood." And one shining one will say to his fellow, "What is that? Tell me that strange story." Then will his companion delight to say, "They were saved because the Son of God took their nature, and in that nature died." "Wonderful! Wonderful!" his friend will answer, "How could it be? Was there suffering for them, and pain for them, and bloody sweat for them, and death for them on the part of the ever-blessed Son of God?" The answer "It was even so," will be news full of astonishment even to the best instructed celestial mind. Spirits will look at us with wonder, and say, "What strange beings are these? Others are the work of God's hands, but these are the fruit of the travail of his soul. On others we see the marks of divine skill and power, but here we see the tokens of a divine sacrifice—a divine blood-shedding." Truly, we may say of our redemption, "This is David's spoil." That you and I should be such wonders as we must be in being redeemed beings, is indeed something given to us by Jesus over and above what Adam lost; and throughout eternity all the sacred brotherhood of the redeemed by blood will be princes in the courts of God—the aristocracy of heaven, for "he hath made us kings and priests unto God."

We shall be creatures who have known sin, and have been recovered from its pollution. There will be no fear of our being exalted with pride, or drawn away by ambition as the now-apostate angels were; for we shall constantly remember what sin did for us, and how grievous was our fault. We shall for ever remember the price at which we were redeemed; and we shall have ties upon us that will bind us to an undeviating loyalty to him who exalted us to so glorious a condition. It seems to me wonderful beyond expression: the more I consider, the more I am astonished. A spirit that has never fallen cannot be trusted in the same way as one that has fallen and has been delivered, and has been new-created, and blood-washed, and has been gifted with an abiding and eternal character. Such a being shall never fall, because for ever held by cords of love eternal, and bonds of gratitude infinitely strong, which will never let it waver in holy service. It is a work worthy of a God to create such beings as we shall be, since we shall be securely bound to voluntary holiness; and our wills, though always free, shall be immutably loyal to our Lord. As the twice-born, we shall be the noblest of God's works; we shall be the first-fruits of his creatures; we shall be accounted as the royal treasure of Jehovah. Then shall we sit with Christ upon his throne, and reign with him for ever. "This is David's spoil."

We receive blessings unknown to beings who have never fallen. I sometimes murmur to myself—and sweet music it has been as I

have quietly murmured it—we are the elect of God. Election is a privilege most high and precious, what can exceed it in delight? This also is David's spoil. We are also redeemed from among men: the redemption of the soul is precious. "This is David's spoil." We are covenanted ones, with whom God has entered into bonds of promise, swearing by an oath to keep his word: this, too, is David's spoil. Where had you ever heard of redemption, election, covenant, and such-like words, if it had not been for the blessed Christ of God, who hath redeemed us by his blood? Sing ye, then, who have received back your lost inheritance: and sing more sweetly still, ye who have been blessed with all spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies according as the Father hath chosen you in Christ Jesus. Sing ye aloud unto his holy name; and say of your special privileges, "This is David's spoil."

Again, to my mind it is a very blessed fact that you and I will partake of a privilege which would have been certainly unnecessary to Adam, and could not by Adam have been known, and that is, *the privilege of resurrection.* We shall die unless the Lord should suddenly appear. I would not have you, brothers and sisters, look upon the prospect of death with any sort of dread. I know that death is associated with pain; but nothing can be more absurd. There is no pain in death: pain belongs to life; death, even naturally, puts an end to pain. But death to the believer is undressing as his Lord undressed—putting off garments of which, I trow, we need not be so very fond, for they do fit us ill; and oftentimes, when our spirit is willing, it is hampered by these garments of clay, for the flesh is weak. Some look with intense delight to the prospect of the Saviour's coming, as a means of escape from death. I confess I have but slender sympathy with them. If I might have my choice, I would prefer, of the two, to die. Let it be as the Lord wills; but there is a point of fellowship with Christ in death which they will miss who shall not sleep; and it seems to me to have some sweetness in it to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, even though he descend unto the sepulchre. "Where should the dying members rest but with their dying Head?" That grave of our blessed Lord, if he had not meant us to enter it, would have been left an empty tenement when he came away; but when he came out of it, he left it furnished for those that should come after him. See there the grave-clothes folded up for us to use! The bed is prepared for our slumber.

The napkin is laid by itself, because it is not for the sleeper, but for those who have lost his company. Those who remain behind may dry their eyes with the napkin, but the grave-clothes are reserved for others who will occupy the royal bed-chamber. When great men removed in the olden time, their servants took away the arras or hangings of their chambers; but if those hangings remained, it was for the convenience of guests who were invited to occupy my lord's rooms. See, then, our Lord expects us to lie in his royal bed-chamber, for he has left the hangings behind him! To the retiring-room of the tomb we shall go in due time. And why should we be grieved to go? For we shall come forth again: we shall rise from the dead. "Thy brother shall rise again," was Mary's consolation from the Master's lips. It is yours. We are not going to a prison, but to a bath, wherein the body, like Esther, shall be purified to behold the King. It is our joy to be

sure that "as the Lord our Saviour rose, so all his followers must." We do not know much about the resurrection of the body, and therefore we will not attempt to describe it; but surely it will be a delightful thing to be able to dwell for ever in a body that has been in the grave, and has had fulfilled in it the sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," but which has been raised again by that same power which raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. We shall inhabit a body which shall no more see corruption, nor be subject to weakness, or pain, or decay, but shall be like the glorified person of our Lord. Oh, there is sweetness in the thought that we shall in this for ever have fellowship with our risen Lord! Children of the resurrection, dread not death! Your faces are turned to the sun. Press forward to the light eternal, and fear not to pass through the death-shadow: it is no more than a shadow. If you cannot leap over the grave, you can pass through it. It shall be your joy to rise when the morning breaketh, and to be satisfied; for you shall wake up in his likeness. As for the resurrection, "this is David's spoil," this is Christ's gift and boon. The resurrection from the dead is the peculiar glory of Christianity. The immortality of the soul had been taught and known before, for it is a truth which even reason itself teaches; but the resurrection of the body comes in as the last and crowning comfort of our spirits: and "this is David's spoil."

Let me not weary you. The topic might well interest us on several occasions; it is too large to be confined to one discourse. *Our singular relation to God, and yet to materialism*, is another rare gift of Jesus. God intended, by the salvation of man, and the lifting up of man into union with himself, to link together in one the lowest and the highest—his creation and himself. Shall I make it very plain? These poor substances—earth, water, and the like—they seem far down in the scale. God makes a being that shall be, as an old Puritan used to say, half soul and half soil; even man who is both spirit and dust of the earth. We find in him water, salts, acids, all sorts of substances combined to make up a body, and married to this is a soul, which is brother to the angels, and akin to Deity. Materialism is somewhat exalted in being connected with spirit at all. When spirit becomes connected with God, and refined materialism becomes connected with a purified spirit, by the resurrection from the dead, then shall be brought to pass the uplifting of clay, and its junction with the celestial. Do you not see how God, in the perfecting of his gracious purpose through the resurrection of the dead, causes his glory to be reflected even upon what we regard as poor material substances, gross and mean?

Try and get at my meaning again. Quakers, whom I greatly respect, get rid of the two ordinances, by denying that they are of perpetual obligation. They banish baptism: they put away the Lord's supper. I have sometimes wished that I were able to agree with them, because my whole spirit and tendency are towards the spiritual rather than the ritual; but if anything be plain to me in Scripture, it is that Jesus Christ did command us to be baptized in water in the Triune name, and that he bade his disciples remember him in the breaking of bread and in the drinking of the cup. The danger of men's making too much of outward forms was encountered for some wise purpose. It was, I think,

because God would have us know that even the material, though it can only enter the outer court, is still to be sanctified unto himself. Therefore, water, bread, and wine, all material substances, are used not only as symbols, but as tokens that all created things shall be ennobled and sanctified. Look ye, sirs, "Creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." Through man's sin this outward world became blackened, darkened, and degraded; but God intends, through man, to lift up the nethermost extremities of his creation into a greater nearness to himself than they ever could have reached by any other means. And this is how it comes about. We are taking up with us, as it were, the earth which makes a part of ourselves. We are drawing up with ourselves the earth in those simple symbols with which we worship God. We are ourselves lifted up as spirits, and we are soon to be lifted up as spirits enshrined in purified bodies, and thus we bring the whole creation of God into nearer contact with himself. Hence it is that we are called "kings and priests." What can the dead earth do in worship till there comes one who worships God as the world's priest? What can the fields and woods and hills say in the worship of God? They are dumb till a tongue attempts the holy task of uttering their praise. You and I are made of such stuff as the world around us, and yet we are the compeers of angels. We are brothers to the worm; and this body of ours is but a child of mother earth on which it lives. See then how mother earth worships God through us, and dull, dead matter finds life and song. Behold the mists and clouds become a steaming incense of praise to God through men like ourselves, who, because Christ was slain, have been made kings and priests unto God.

I wish you would, rather than listen to me, try and muse upon the wonderful position which redeemed men do now occupy, and will occupy for ever and ever. For my own part, I would not change places with the angel Gabriel, nay, not if he gave me his swift wing to boot, for I believe that an infinitely greater honour belongs to the least of God's children than to the very highest of God's servants. To be a child of God—oh, bliss!—there is no glory that can excel it. But all this is a special gift to our humanity through our Lord Jesus. "This is David's spoil."

Our manifestation of the full glory of God is another of the choice gifts which the pierced hands of Jesus alone bestow. Principalities and powers shall see in the mystical body of Christ more of God than in all the universe besides. They will study in the saints the eternal purposes of God, and see therein his love, his wisdom, his power, his justice, his mercy blended in an amazing way. They will admire for ever those whom God loves and delights in, those whom he keeps as the apple of his eye, those whom he rejoices over, and of whom he hath said that he will rest in his love, and he will rejoice over them with singing. Truly it hath not entered into the heart of man to guess at the glory of God in the saints, the exceeding glory which shall be revealed in us through Jesus Christ our Lord. "This is David's spoil." Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us magnify the name of Jesus Christ!

III. I close with the most practical part of my sermon: THAT WHICH WE WILLINGLY GIVE TO JESUS MAY BE CALLED HIS SPOIL. There

is a spoil for Christ which every true-hearted follower of his votes to him enthusiastically. We have already seen that all things which we have are of Christ, and that there are certain special gifts which are peculiarly of Christ; and now, what shall be David's spoil from you and from me?

First, *our hearts are his alone for ever.*

> "Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,
> Seal it from thy courts above."

Of every believing heart it may be said, "This is David's spoil." You and I must give ourselves to-morrow to earning our daily bread, and our thoughts must go, to a large extent, after earthly things in the common pursuits of every-day life. But our hearts, our hearts, are as fountains sealed for our Well-beloved. O mammon, thou shalt not have them! O pleasure, thou shalt not have them! These are David's spoil. Our hearts belong to Jesus only. "My son, give me thine heart," is an Old Testament command, but under the New Testament manifestation of love we fulfil it; "for the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Let it be so that our whole heart is the sole possession of Jesus! We will neither rend it, nor cast lots whose it shall be, for "this is David's spoil."

Now there is another property I should like King Jesus to have, and that is, *our special gifts.* I know one who, before his conversion, was wont to sing, and he often charmed the ears of men with the sweet music which he poured forth; but when he was converted he said, "Henceforth my tongue shall sing nothing but the praises of God." He devoted himself to proclaiming the gospel by his song, for he said, "This is David's spoil." Have you not some gift or other, dear friend, of which you could say, "Henceforth this shall be sacred to my bleeding Lord"? Some peculiar faculty? Some choice piece of acquirement not generally possessed? Something in which you excel? I would that you had at least some little garden of flowers or herbs which you could so reserve that therein only Jesus should pluck the fruits. Say of the best gift you possess, "This is David's spoil." Is it not well to consecrate some part of the day, and say, "This hour is Christ's? I have my work to do, my business must be seen to; all is Christ's. But still I will reserve a special season, and wall it in, like a private garden, in which, with prayer, and praise, and meditation, I will commune with my Lord; or else in actual service I will honour his name." Say, "This is David's spoil." Come, dear heart, what do you mean to give him? Surely you have some natural faculty or acquired skill which you can lay at his feet.

Moreover, while our whole selves must be yielded to the Lord Jesus, there is one thing that must always be Christ's, and that is *our religious homage as a church.* Somebody says that the Queen is head of the church. God bless her; but she is no head of the church of Christ! The idea is blasphemous: headship "is David's spoil." Jesus Christ is Head over all things to his church, and nobody else can take that position. No one may dare to take the title of "head of the

church" without a usurpation of our Lord's royal right. Certain teachers of the church claim authority over consciences, and assert that they are infallible. I have heard it said that they are supreme guides, but I do not believe it, because "This is David's spoil." We have one infallible Teacher, and that is Jesus Christ our Saviour. We yield obedience to his every word, and demand that others should do the same. Whatsoever *he* says to us by his Spirit in the Word of God is to us infallible truth, and we cease to dispute when Jesus speaks; but no man else shall dictate doctrine to us, for "This is David's spoil." He must be sole Rabbi in the midst of his church. We call him Master and Lord, for so he is. I would have you keep your conscience for Christ alone. Take care that no book ever overlaps the Bible; that no creed ever contradicts the form of sound words contained in God's own Word; that no influence of minister or writer supplants the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Your soul's obedience and faith belong to Jesus only: "This is David's spoil."

Lastly, have you not something of *your own proper substance* that shall be David's spoil just now? That was a blessed act when the woman broke the most precious thing she had—her box of alabaster, and let the perfumed nard stream down the Saviour, anointing him for his burial. She felt that the precious perfume was "David's spoil." There was no waste; in fact, no other gift ever went so completely to its purpose without being taxed on the road, for Jesus had it all. Kindly did he observe the loving honour which she paid him. What if the ointment were sold, and given to the poor? Yet it could never be so economically used as when it was all devoted to him. I do think it so pleasant sometimes to give Jesus Christ distinctly a gift from yourself of somewhat that you will miss. It is good to give to the poor, but it has a daintier sweetness in it to do somewhat distinctly for him, for the spread of his own glory, and the making known of his own fame. "The poor ye have always with you": abound towards them in your charity whenever you will; but to your Lord at special seasons dedicate a choice gift, and say, "This is David's spoil." There was a poor woman once, whose little fortune could be carried between her finger and her thumb, —her fortune I said, for it was all that she had. Two mites, I am told, was all it came to. She took it, it was her all, and she put it in the treasury; for this was "David's spoil." It belonged to the Lord her God, and she gave it cheerfully. I do not know whether since the days of the apostles anybody has ever given so much as that woman. I have not. Have you? She gave all her living. Not all her savings, but all her living. She had nothing left when she gave her farthing: she loved so much that she consecrated all her living. We sometimes sing—

> "Yet if I might make some reserve,
> And duty did not call,
> I love my God with zeal so great
> That I would give him all."

But do we mean it? If not, why do we sing falsehoods? There was a man who, in the providence of God, had been enabled to lay by many thousands. He was a very rich and respected man. I have heard it said that he owned at least half-a-million; and at one collection, when

he felt specially grateful and generous, he found a well-worn sixpence for the plate, for that was David's spoil! That was David's spoil! Out of all that he possessed, that sixpence was David's spoil! This was the measure of his gratitude! Judge by this how much he owed, or at least how much he desired to pay. Are there not many persons who, on that despicable scale, reward the Saviour for the travail of his soul? I shall not upbraid them. I shall not urge them to do more, lest I spoil the voluntariness of the large gifts they mean to bring. Let a hint suffice. For us, who are deep in the Redeemer's debt, who have had much forgiven, who every day are bankrupt debtors to the measureless mercy of infinite love—for us, no paltriness will suffice. We must give something which, if it be not worthy of him, shall, at least, express the truth and warmth of the gratitude we feel. God help us to be often setting aside this, and that, and the other choice thing, and saying, "This is David's spoil, and it shall be a joy to my heart to give it!" We shall find much sweetness in buying our sweet-cane with money, and filling our Lord with the fat of our sacrifices. It is heaven for a true heart to give largely to Jesus.

God bless you, dear friends. May we come to the table of communion, and meet with our glorious David there, and feel his praises making music in our hearts! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matt. xxv. 31—46; xxvi. 6—13.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—416, 802.

On *Monday*, *April* 16, the Pastors' College Conference begins with a meeting for prayer at the Tabernacle. Its session continues till Friday, and our Christian friends are earnestly requested to remember it daily in prayer. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the brethren will be an immeasurable blessing to the assembled ministers, and through them to their churches. At no time in the world's history has a divine visitation of grace been more needed than at this crisis. Oh, that we might receive a heavenly baptism yet again!

On *Wednesday*, *April* 18, will be held the College Tea and Supper, which are the true anniversary of the institution. At this meeting much of the financial support for the year is given. It would greatly refresh our heart if friends would show their sympathy with us in the present fierce conflict by increasing the amount given on this occasion to the College funds. Friends who will not be personally present can send in their contributions to C. H. Spurgeon, Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood. It has been our life-work to aid in their studies young men whom the Lord has called to preach his gospel. Though disappointed in a few of them, we are greatly cheered by the fidelity to the gospel which is manifest in the vast majority, and we are encouraged by the conviction that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CURED AT LAST!

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 8TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched."—Luke viii. 43, 44.

THOUGH I take Luke's statement as a text, I shall constantly refer to the version of the same story which we find in Mark v. 25 to 29.

Here we have one of the Lord's hidden ones: a case not to be publicly described because of its secret sorrow. We have here a woman of few words and much shamefacedness. Her malady subjected her to grievous penalties according to the ceremonial law. There is a terrible chapter in the Book of Leviticus concerning such a case as hers. She was unclean; everything that she sat upon, and all who touched it, shared in the defilement. So that, in addition to her continual weakness, she was made to feel herself an outcast, under the ban of the law. This created, no doubt, great loneliness of spirit, and made her wish to hide herself out of sight. In the narrative before us she said not a word until the Saviour drew it out of her, for her own lasting good. She acted very practically and promptly, but she was a silent seeker: she would have preferred to have remained in obscurity, if so it could have been. Some here may belong to the great company of the timid and trembling ones. If courage before others is needed to secure salvation, matters will go hard with them, for they shrink from notice, and are ready to die of shame because of their secret grief. Cowper's hymn describes their inward feelings, when it says of the woman—

> "Conceal'd amid the gathering throng
> She would have shunn'd thy view,
> And if her faith was firm and strong,
> Had strong misgivings too."

Such plants grow in the shade, and shrink from the light of the sun. The nature of their sorrows forces them into solitary self-communion. Oh, that the Lord may heal such at this hour!

The immediate cure of this woman is the more remarkable because it was a wayside miracle. The Saviour was on the road to restore the

daughter of Jairus; this woman's healing was an extra of grace, a sort of over-splash of the great fountain of mercy. The cup of our Lord's power was full—full to the brim—and he was bearing it to the house of the ruler of the synagogue; this poor creature did but receive a drop which he spilt on the way. *We* do well if, when going upon some errand of love, we concentrate all our energy upon it, and do it well in the end: but the Saviour could not only perform one great marvel, but he could work another as a sort of by-play incidentally—I had almost said, accidentally, on the road. The episodes of the Lord Jesus are as beautiful as the main run of his life's poem. Oh, that this day, while my sermon may seem meant for one, and distinctly directed to his salvation, it may also, by the power of Jesus, save another not so clearly pointed at! While the word is aimed at one particular character, may the Lord cause the very wind of the gospel shot to overcome another: or, to change the figure for a better one, while we spread the table for some bidden guest, may another hungry soul have grace given him to take his place at the banquet of grace! May those who hide away, and whom, therefore, we are not likely to discover, come forth to Jesus, and touch him, and live!

Let us at once speak of this much-afflicted woman, for she is a typical character. While we describe her conduct and *her* cure, I trust she may serve as a looking-glass in which many tremblers may see themselves. We shall carefully note *what she had done*, and then *what came of it*. This will lead us on to see *what she did at last*, and *what we also should do*. May the Holy Spirit make this a very practical discourse by causing you to follow her till you gain the blessing as she did! The preacher is very weak; and may the Lord, for this very reason, work by him to your salvation.

Consider, therefore, concerning this woman, WHAT SHE HAD DONE. She had been literally dying for twelve years. What had she been doing? Had she resigned herself to her fate, or treated her malady as a small matter? Far from it. Her conduct is highly instructive.

First, *she had resolved not to die if a cure could be had.* She was evidently a woman of great determination and hopefulness. She knew that this disease of hers would cause her life to ebb away, and bring her to the grave; but she said within herself, "I will have a struggle for it. If there is a possibility of removing this plague it shall be removed, let it cost me what it may of pain or payment." Oh, what a blessing it would be if unsaved ones here would say each one for himself, "I am a lost soul; but if a lost soul can be saved, I will be saved. I am guilty; but if guilt can be washed away, mine shall be washed away. I have a hard heart, and I know it; but if a heart of stone can be turned into a heart of flesh, I long to have it so, and I will never rest until this gracious work is wrought in me!" Alas, it is not so with many! Indifference is the rule; indifference about their immortal souls! Many are sick with dire spiritual disease, but they make no resolve to have it cured; they trifle with sin, and death, and heaven, and hell.

Insensibility has seized upon many, and a proud conceit: they are full of sin, and yet they talk of self-righteousness. They are weak, and can do nothing; yet they boast of their ability. They are not conscious

of their true condition, and hence they have no mind to seek a cure. How should they desire healing when they do not believe that they are diseased? How sad that beneath the ruddy cheek of morality there should lurk the fatal consumption of enmity to God! How horrible to be fair without and leprous within! Are there not many who can talk freely about religion, and seem as if they were right with God, and yet in the secret of their hearts they are the victims of an insincerity, and a want of truth, which fatally undermine the life of their profession. They are not what they seem to be: a secret sin drains away the life-blood of their religion. May the Holy Spirit show every unregenerate person the fatal nature of his soul's disease; for this, I trust, would lead to the making of a firm resolve to find salvation, if salvation is to be had.

No doubt some are held back from such action by the freezing power of despair. They have reached the conclusion that there is no hope for them. The promises of the gospel they regard as the voice of God to others, but as having no cheering word for them. One might suppose that they had searched the book of life, and had made sure that their names were not written there; they act as if their death-warrant had been signed. They cannot believe in the possibility of their becoming partakers of everlasting life. They are under a destroying delusion, which leads them to abandon hope. None are more presumptuous than the despairing. When men have no hope, they soon have no fear. Is not this a dreadful thing? May the Lord save you from such a condition! Despair of God's mercy is an unreasonable thing: if you think you have grounds for it, the lying spirit must have suggested them to you. Holy Scripture contains no justification for hopelessness. No mortal hath a just pretence to perish in despair. Neither the nature of God, nor the gospel of God, nor the Christ of God, warrant despair. Multitudes of texts encourage hope; but no one Scripture, rightly understood, permits a doubt of the mercy of God. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Jesus, the great Healer, is never baffled by any disease of human nature: he can cast out a legion of devils, and raise the dead. Oh that I could whisper hope into the dull ear of yonder mourner! Oh that I could drop a rousing thought into the sullen heart of the self-condemned! How glad should I be! My poor desponding friend, I would fain see thy chains snapped, thy fetters broken off! Oh that the Spirit of God would cause thee, like this woman, to resolve that if there be healing for thy soul thou wilt have it!

Alas! many have never come to this gracious resolution, because they cherish a vain hope, and are misled by an idle dream. They fancy that salvation will come to them without their seeking it. Certainly, they have no right to expect such a thing. It is true that our Lord is found of them that sought him not; but that is an act of his own sovereignty, and is not a rule for our procedure. The plain directions of the gospel are, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." How dare they set these gracious words aside? They fancy that they may wake up, one of these fine days, and find themselves saved. Alas! it may more likely happen

to them, as to the rich man in the parable, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." God grant that none of you may trifle your souls into such misery! Some fancy that in the article of death, they may cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and so may leap into salvation. It seems to them a very slight business to be reconciled to God. They imagine that they can be converted just when they will, and so they put it off from day to day, as if it were of no more consequence than going to shop to buy a coat or a gown. Believe me, the Word of God does not set forth the matter in this way. It tells us that even the righteous scarcely are saved, and it rouses us to strive to enter in at the strait gate. God save you from every false confidence which would prevent your being in earnest about the healing of your souls. Spiritually, your case is as desperate as that of the poor woman now before us. May the Lord sweetly constrain you to feel that you must be healed, and that you cannot afford to put off the blessed day! If beneath the firmament of heaven there is healing for a sin-sick soul, seek it till you find it. When the Lord brings you to this resolve by his good Spirit, you will not be far from the kingdom of heaven.

Let us next note, that *this woman having made her resolve, adopted the likeliest means she could think of.* Physicians are men set apart on purpose to deal with human maladies, therefore she went to the physicians. What better could she do? Though she failed, yet she did what seemed most likely to succeed. Now, when a soul is resolved to find salvation, it is most fit and proper that it should use every likely means for the finding of salvation. Oh, that they were wise enough to hear the gospel, and to come at once to Jesus; but often they make grave mistakes. This woman went to gentlemen who were supposed to understand the science of medicine. Was it not natural that she should look for help to their superior wisdom? She cannot be blamed for looking to the men of light and leading. Many, in these days, do the same thing. They hear of the new discoveries of professedly cultured men, and hear their talk about the littleness of sin, and the larger hope, and the non-necessity of the new birth. Poor deceived creatures! they find in the long run that nothing comes of it; for the wisdom of man is nothing but pretentious folly. The world by wisdom knows neither God nor his salvation. Many there are who know all the less of saving truth because they know so much of what human fancy has devised, and human search discovered. We cannot blame the woman that, being a simple soul, and anxious for healing, she went to those first who were thought to know most. Let us not, with Christ so near, go roundabout as she did, but let us touch our Lord at once.

No doubt the sufferer also tried men who had diplomas, or were otherwise authorized to act as physicians. How can you blame her for going to those who were in the succession, and had the official stamp? Many sin-sick souls nowadays are, at first, very hopeful that the ordained clergy can benefit them by their duly performed services and duly administered sacraments. At least, good men, eminent in the church, may be looked to for aid; surely these know how to deal with souls! Alas! it is vain to look to men at all, and foolish to depend on

official dignity, or special repute. Some teachers do not know much about their own souls, and therefore know less about the souls of others. Vain is the help of man, be the man who he may. Whatever his popularity, learning, or eloquence, if you seek to him for his prayers, or his teachings, as able to save you, you will certainly seek in vain; as this poor woman did. She is not to be blamed, but to be commended, that she did what seemed best to her, according to her light; but you are warned; go not, therefore, to men.

No doubt she met with some who boasted that they could heal her complaint at once. They began by saying, "You have tried So-and-so, but he is a mere quack; mine is a scientific remedy. You have used a medicine which I could have told you would be worthless; but I have the secret. Put yourself absolutely into my hands, and the thing is done. I have healed many that have been given up by all the faculty. Follow my orders, and you will be restored." Sick persons are so eager to recover that they readily take the bait which is offered them by brazen impudence. An oily tongue and a bland manner, backed with unblushing assurance, are sure to win their way with one who is anxious to gain that which is offered. Ah, me! "All is not gold that glitters;" and all the professions which are made of helping sin-sick souls are not true professions. Many pretenders to new revelations are abroad, but they are physicians of no value. There is no balm in Gilead; there is no physician there: if there had been, the hurt of the daughter of my people had long ago been healed. There is no medicine beneath the sky that can stay the palpitations of a heart which dreads the judgment to come. No earthly surgery can take away the load of sin from the conscience. No hand of priest or presbyter, prophet or philosopher, can cleanse the leprosy of guilt. The finger of God is wanted here. There is one Heal-all, one divine *Catholicon*, and only one. Happy is he that hath received this infallible balm from Jehovah Rophi—the Lord that healeth. Yet we marvel not that when souls are pressed down with a sense of guilt, they try anything and everything which offers even a faint hope of relief. I could wish that all my hearers had an intense zeal to find salvation; for even if it led them into passing mistakes, yet, under God's blessing, they would find their way out of them, and end by glorifying the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which never fails.

This woman, in the next place, having resolved not to die if cure could be had, and having adopted the likeliest means, *persevered in the use of those means.* No doubt she tried many, and even opposite, remedies. One doctor said, "You had better go to the warm baths of the lake of Tiberias; such bathing will be comforting and helpful." She grew worse at the warm bath, and went to another physician, who said, "You were wrongly treated; you need bracing up in the cold baths of the Jordan." Thus she went from vanity to vanity, to find both of them useless. An eminent practitioner assured her that she needed an internal remedy, and he alone could give her an infallible receipt. This, however, was of no use to her; and she went to another, who said that an external application should be tried, such as Isaiah's lump of figs. What perseverance that woman must have had! I am not going to say anything about our doctors nowadays, no doubt they

are the most learned and skilful that can be: but in earlier times surgery was murderous, and medicines were poisonous. Many of the prescriptions of those days are sickening, and yet ridiculous. I read yesterday a prescription, of our Saviour's time, warranted to cure many diseases, which consisted of grasshopper's eggs. These were supposed to exercise a marvellous influence, but they are no longer in the list of medicines. The tooth of a fox was said to possess special powers; but I noticed that one of the chief drugs of all, the most expensive, but the surest in its action, was a nail from the finger of a man who had been hanged. It was important that he should have been hanged: another finger-nail might have had no efficacy. Poor creatures were made to suffer most painfully by cruel medicines, which were far worse than the disease. As for surgical operations, if they had been designed to kill, they were certainly admirably arranged for their purpose. The wonder is that for twelve years poor human nature could stand out, not against the disease, but against the doctors. Brethren, the case is much the same spiritually. How many under their burden of sin go first to one, and then to another; practise this, and agonize after that, and pine for the other, perseveringly, and still without avail! Travel as fast as you may in a wrong direction, you will not reach the place you seek. Vain are all things save Jesus our Lord.

Have you been to Doctor Ceremony? He is, at this time, the fashionable doctor. Has he told you that you must attend to forms and rules? Has he prescribed you so many prayers, and so many services? Ah! many go to him, and they persevere in a round of religious observances, but these yield no lasting ease to the conscience. Have you tried Doctor Morality? He has a large practice, and is a fine old Jewish physician. "Be good in outward character," says he, "and it will work inwardly, and cleanse the heart." A great many persons are supposed to have been cured by him and by his assistant, Doctor Civility, who is nearly as clever as his master: but I have it on good evidence that neither of them apart, nor even the two together, could ever deal with an inward disease. Do what you may, your own doings will not stanch the wounds of a bleeding heart. Doctor Mortification has also a select practice; but men are not saved by denying themselves until they first deny their self-righteousness. Doctor Excitement has many patients, but his cures seldom outlive the set of sun. Doctor Feeling is much sought after by tender spirits; these try to feel sorrow and remorse; but, indeed, the way of cure does not lie in that quarter. Let everything be done that can be done apart from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and the sick soul will be nothing bettered. You may try human remedies for the space of a lifetime, but sin will remain in power, guilt will cling to the conscience, and the heart will abide as hard as ever.

But this woman not only thus tried the most likely means and persevered in the use of them, but *she also spent all her substance over it.* That was perhaps the chief thing in ancient surgery!—this golden ointment which did good to the physician, whatever became of the patient. The most important point was to pay the doctor. This woman's living was wasting away as well as her life. She continued

to pay, and to pay, and to pay; but she received no benefit from it all; say, rather, that she suffered more than she would have done had she kept her gold. Thus do men waste their thought, their care, their prayer, their agony over that which is as nothing: they spend their money for that which is not bread. At last she came to her last shekel. In the end there was an end to her means; but so long as the silver lasted, she lavished it out of the bag. What would not a man give to be saved? I never wonder that dying men give their estates to priests in the hope that they can save their souls. If gold could purchase pardon, who would withhold it? Health of body, if it could be purchased with gold, would be cheap at any price; but health of soul, holiness of character, acceptance with God, assurance of heaven—these would be cheap if we counted out worlds as poor men pay down their pence for bread. There are men so mean that they would not part with a pound for a place in Paradise; but if these once knew their true condition, they would alter their minds. The price of wisdom is above rubies. If we had mines of gold, we might profitably barter them for the salvation of our souls.

Beloved, you see where this woman was. She was in downright, desperate earnest to have her mortal malady healed, and so she spared neither her labour nor her living. In this we may wisely imitate her.

II. We have seen what the woman had done; now let us think of WHAT HAD COME OF IT. We are told that she had suffered many things of many physicians. That was her sole reward for trusting and spending: she had not been relieved, much less healed; but *she had suffered.* She had endured much additional suffering through seeking a cure. That is the case with you who have not come to Christ, but, being under a sense of sin, have sought relief apart from him. All that you do apart from Jesus, in order to win salvation, will only cause you increased suffering. You have tried to save yourself by prayers; your prayers have turned your thoughts upon your sin and its punishment, and thus you have become more wretched than before. You have attended to ceremonies, and if you have used them sincerely, they have wrought in you a solemn sense of the holiness of God, and of your own distance from him; and this, though very proper, has only increased your sorrow. You have been trying to feel good, and to do good, that so you may be good; but the very effort has made you feel how far off you are from the goodness you so much desire. Your self-denial has excited cravings after evil, and your mortifications have given new life to your pride. Efforts after salvation made in your own strength act like the struggles of a drowning man, which sink the more surely. As the fruit of your desperate efforts, you have suffered all the more. In the end, I trust this may work for your good, but up till now it has served no healing purpose: you are now at death's door, and all your praying, weeping, church-going, chapel-going, and sacrament-taking, do not help you one bit.

There has been this peculiarly poignant pang about it all, that you are *nothing bettered.* Cheerily did you hope, but cruelly are you disappointed. You cried, "I have it this time," but the bubble vanished as you grasped it. The evil of your nature, when repressed in one

place, broke out in another. You dealt with the symptoms of your disease, but you did not cut off the root of the mischief: it only showed itself in another form, but it never went away. You gave up one sin only to fall into another: you watched at the front entrance, and the thief stole in at the back door. Up till now, O soul, thou hast not come to Jesus, and after all thy goings elsewhere, thou art nothing bettered!

And now, perhaps, this morning you are saying, "What can I do? What shall I do?" I will tell you. You can do nothing except what this woman ultimately did, of which I will speak by-and-by. You are now brought to this extremity—that you are without strength, without merit, without power, and you must look out of yourself to another, who has strength and merit, and can save you. God grant that you may look to that glorious One before this service is over!

We read of this woman, that though she suffered much, she was nothing better, but *rather grew worse.* No better after twelve years of medicine? She went to the Egyptian doctor, and he promised her health in three months. She was worse. She tried the Syrian doctor: he was a man who had great knowledge of the occult sciences, and was not ashamed to practise enchantments. She was bitterly disappointed to find herself decidedly weaker. Then she heard of a Greek practitioner, who would cure her, heigh presto! in a trice. She paid her remaining money, but she still went backward. She bought disappointment very dearly. Friend, is this your condition? You are anxious to be right, and, therefore, you are earnest in every effort to save yourself; but still you are nothing bettered. You climb a treadmill, and are no higher after all your climbing. You drift down the river with one tide, and you float up again when it turns. Night after night you pull up in the same old creek that you started from. Oh, pitiful condition! Getting grey, too: becoming quite the old gentleman; and yet no nearer eternal life than when, as a lad, you used to attend the house of God, and wish to become a child of God. Nothing bettered? No; she grew worse? Fresh mischief had developed: other diseases fed upon her weakness; she was more emaciated, more lifeless than ever. Sad result of so much perseverance! And is not that the case with some of you who are in earnest, but are not enlightened? You are working, and growing poorer as you work. There is not about you so much as there used to be of good feeling, or sincere desire, or prayerfulness, or love for the Bible, or care to hear the gospel. You are becoming more careless, more dubious than you once were. You have lost much of you former sensitiveness. You are doing certain things now that would have startled you years ago, and you are leaving certain matters undone which once you would have thought essential. Evidently you are caught in the current, and are nearing the cataract. The Lord deliver you!

This is a sad, sad case! As a climax of it all, the heroine of our story had now *spent all that she had.* She could not go now to the Egyptian doctor, or to the Syrian doctor, or to the Hebrew doctor, or to the Roman doctor, or to the Greek doctor. No; now she must do without their flattering unction in the future. As for those famous medicines which raised her hopes, she can buy no more of such costly

inventions. This was, perhaps, her bitterest grief: but let me whisper it in your ear—this was the best thing that had yet happened to her; and I am praying that it may happen to some of you. At the bottom of your purse I trust you will find wisdom. When we come to the end of self we come to the beginning of Christ. That last shekel binds us to the pretenders, but absolute bankruptcy sets us free to go to him who heals diseases without money and without price. Glad enough am I when I meet with a man who is starved out of self-sufficiency. Welcome, brother! Now you are ready for Jesus. When all your own virtue has gone out of you, then shall you seek and find that virtue which goeth out of him.

III. This brings to our notice, in the third place, WHAT THIS WOMAN DID AT LAST. Weaker and weaker had she become, and her purse had become lighter and lighter. She hears of Jesus of Nazareth, a man sent of God who is healing sick folk of all sorts. She hears attentively; she puts the stories together that she hears; she believes them; they have the likeness of truth about them. "Oh," says she, "there is yet another opportunity for me. I will get in the crowd, and if I can only touch the bit of blue which he wears as the border of his garment, I shall be made whole." Splendid faith! It was thought much of in her own day, and we may still more highly prize it now that faith has grown so rare.

Note well *she resolved to trust in Jesus in sheer despair of doing anything else.* My dear friend, I do not know where you are sitting this morning in this great congregation—I almost wish I did, that I might come up to you and say to you personally, "Try Jesus Christ, trust him, and see whether he will not save you. Every other door is evidently shut; why not enter by Christ the door? There is no other life-buoy; lay hold on this! Say with our versifier—

> "I can but perish if I go;
> I am resolved to try;
> For if I stay away, I know
> I must for ever die."

Exercise the courage which is born of desperation. May God the Holy Spirit help you now to thrust forth your finger, and get into touch with Jesus! Say, "Yes, I freely accept Christ. By God's grace, I will have him to be my only hope. I will have him now." Be driven to Jesus by force of circumstances. Since there is no other port, O weather-beaten barque, make for this one! Wanderer, here is a refuge! Turn in hither, for there is no other shelter.

After all, *this was the simplest and easiest thing that she could do.* Touch Jesus. Put out thy finger, and touch the hem of his garment. The prescriptions she had purchased were long; but this was short enough. The operations performed upon her had been intricate; but this was simplicity itself. The suffering she had endured had complicated her case; but this was as plain as a pikestaff. "Touch with your finger the hem of his garment: that is all." O my hearer, you have tried many things, great things, and hard things, and painful things: why not try this simple matter of faith? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Trust Jesus to cleanse you,

and he will do it. Put yourself into your Saviour's hands once for all, and he will save you.

Not only was this the simplest and easiest thing for the poor afflicted one, but certainly *it was the freest and most gracious*. There was not a penny to pay. Nobody stood at the door of the consulting-room to take her guinea; and the good physician did not even give a hint that he expected a reward. The gifts of Jesus are free as the air. He healed this believing woman in the open street, in the midst of the crowd. She had felt that if she could but get into the throng, she would, by hook or by crook, get near enough to reach the hem of his garment, and then she would be healed. It is so this morning, dear hearer. Come, and receive grace freely. Bring no good works, no good words, no good feelings, no good resolves, as the price of pardon; come with an empty hand, and touch the Lord by faith. The good things which you desire, Jesus will give you as the result of his cure; but they cannot be the cause or the price of it. Accept his mercy as the gift of his love! Come empty handed, and receive! Come undeserving, and be favoured! Only come into contact with Jesus, who is the fountain of life and health, and you shall be saved.

This was the quietest thing for her to do. She said nothing. She did not cry aloud like the blind men. She did not ask friends to look on, and see her make her venture. She kept her own counsel, and pushed into the press. In absolute silence, she took a stolen touch of the Lord's robe. O my hearer, you can be saved in silence. You have no need to speak to any person of your acquaintance, not even to mother or father. At this moment, while in the pew, believe and live. Nobody will know that you now are touching the Lord. In after days you will own your faith, but in the act itself you will be alone and unseen. Believe on Jesus. Trust yourself with him. Have done with all other confidences, and say, "He is all my salvation." Take Jesus at once, if not with a hand's grasp, yet with a finger's touch. O you poor, timid, bashful creature, touch the Lord! Trust in his power to save. Do not let me tell you to do it in vain, but do it at once. May God's Spirit cause you to accept Jesus now!

This is *the only effectual thing*. Touch Jesus, and salvation is yours at once. Simple as faith is, it is never-failing. A touch of the fringe of the Saviour's garment sufficed: in a moment she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. "It is twelve years ago," she said to herself, "since I felt like a living woman. I have been sinking in a constant death all this while, but now I feel my strength come back to me." Blessed be the name of the great Healer! She was exceeding glad. Tremble she did, lest it should turn out to be too good to be true; but she was most surely healed. O my dear hearer, do trust my Lord, for he will surely do for you that which none other can achieve. Leave feeling and working, and try faith in Jesus. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so at once!

IV. And now, poor convicted sinner! here comes the driving home of the nail. Do THOU AS THIS WOMAN DID. Ask nobody about it, but do it. She did not go to Peter, James, and John, and say, "Good sirs, advise me." She did not beg from them an introduction to Jesus, but she went of her own accord, and tried for herself

the virtue of a touch. You have had advising enough; now come to real work. There is too much tendency to console ourselves by conversations with godly men: let us get away from them, and speak to their Master. Talks in the enquiry-room, and chats with Christian neighbours, are all very well; but one touch of Jesus will be infinitely better. I do not blame you for seeking religious advice: this may be a half-way house to call at, but do not make it the terminus. Press on till, by personal faith, you have laid hold on Jesus. Do not tell anybody what you are about to do; wait till it is done. Another day you will be happy to tell the minister and God's people of what the Lord has done for you; but for the present, quietly believe in the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Do not even ask yourself about it. If this poor woman had consulted with herself, she might never have ventured so near the holy One of God. So clearly shut out from society by the law of her people and her God, if she had given the matter a second thought, she might have abandoned the idea. Blessed was the impetuosity which thrust her into the crowd, and kept her head above the throng, and her face towards the Lord in the centre of the press. She did not so much reason as dare. Do not ask yourself anything about it; but do it. Believe, and have done with it. Stop not to parley with your own unbelief, nor answer your rising doubts and fears; but at once, upon the instant, put out your finger, touch the hem of his garment, and see what will come of it. God help you to do so while I am speaking!

Yield to the sacred impulse which is just now operating upon you. Do not say, "To-morrow may be more convenient." In this woman's case, there was the Lord before her; she longed to be healed at once, and so, come what may, into the crowd she plunged. She was so enfeebled, that one wonders how she managed to get near him; but possibly the crowd took her off her feet and carried her onward, as often happens in a rush. However, there was her chance, and she seized it. There was the fringe of the Lord's mantle; out went her finger: it was all done. O my friend, you have an opportunity now, by God's great grace, for you are in his house of prayer. Jesus of Nazareth passeth by at this moment. He who speaks to you is not trying to say pretty things, but he is pining to win your soul for Jesus. Oh, how I wish I could lead you to that saving touch! The Spirit of God can do it. May he now move you to cry—"I will believe in the appointed sacrifice, and trust my soul with Jesus"! Have you done so? You are saved. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life."

"Oh, but I tremble so!" So did she whom Jesus healed. Her hand shook, but she touched him all the same for that. I think I see her quivering finger. Poor emaciated woman, with pale and bloodless cheeks! What a taper finger was that which she held out, and how it quivered! However much the finger of your faith may tremble, if it does but touch the hem of the Lord's garment, virtue will flow from him to you. The power is not in the finger which touches, but in the divine Saviour who is touched. So long as there is a contact established between you and the almighty power of Jesus, his power will travel along

your trembling finger, and bring healing to your heart. A telegraph wire may shake with the wind, and yet convey the electric current, and so may a trembling faith convey salvation from Jesus. A strong faith, which rests anywhere but in Jesus, is a delusion; but a weak faith, which rests alone on Jesus, brings sure salvation. Out with your finger! Dear soul, out with your finger! Do not go away till you have touched the Lord by a believing prayer or hope. Holy Spirit, do not suffer any to quit the Tabernacle until, by a believing desire, or trust, or confidence of some sort, they have established a contact between themselves and Jesus, and have felt the virtue enter them for their instant healing. O Lord, save this people! Why do you come, Sunday after Sunday, in such crowds? and why must I stand here and bleed my heart away in love to your souls? Is the sole result to be that I help you to spend an hour-and-a-half in a sort of religious amusement? What a waste it is of my labour, and of your time, unless some gracious work is done! O sirs, if you are not brought to Christ, my preaching will prove a curse to you! It appals me to think that the preaching of the gospel will be a savour of death unto you unless it brings you life. Put not the day of grace from you. By the living God, I do implore you, trust the living Redeemer. As I shall meet you all, face to face, before the judgment-seat of Christ, I do implore and beseech you, put out the finger of faith, and trust the Lord Jesus, who is so fully worthy to be trusted. The simple trust of your heart will stay the death which now works in you. Lord, give that trust, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark v. 21—43.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 493, 603.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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"SHE WAS NOT HID."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 15TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately."—Luke viii. 47.

LAST Sabbath morning we spoke upon the woman who was healed of her issue of blood. After having spent all her living upon physicians, and being disappointed in them all, she touched the Saviour's garment and was healed immediately. She came behind him, for she did not wish to be seen. She said not a word: she had not the courage to ask for the blessing in an open manner. When cured, she slunk away into the crowd: she was anxious to be unobserved. Now, if the story had ended here, you would not have been surprised. It was a case of extreme delicacy, that might seem to require a specially secret ending, by the woman's being permitted to go her way home, happy and whole.

But now, suppose that, in the tenderness of our Saviour's sympathy with this trembling woman, he had permitted her to depart without making an open confession, what would have been the consequence? The Saviour willed that the miracle should be recorded in three of the four Gospels, and if it had ended where we left it last Sabbath morning, then such is our human nature, that we should have drawn from it the inference that saving faith need not be confessed. Our natural love of ease, and our desire to avoid the cross, would have made us follow this woman's example, and we should have tried to touch the Lord for healing, and then run away from him without making any profession of discipleship. Many would have quoted her case as a reason why they might be allowed to escape the responsibilities, duties, and sufferings which discipleship might involve. If the Saviour had permitted this woman to retire in silence, many cowardly believers would have said that the Saviour's silence gave consent to her retiring without a word, and that they might safely imitate her. I know the men and their style of reasoning. This would have been fine nuts for them. Think how this story would have been used in times of martyrdom. The cowardly would have

argued, "We may have to go to prison or to the stake if we confess Christ; why should we be so needlessly daring? We can receive grace from Jesus quite unknown to anybody, and having gained salvation we can mingle with the crowd and avoid exposing ourselves to danger." The Saviour would not allow us to find in this case an apology for an evil course, and so he called out the woman whom he had cured. The spirit of hiding, thank God, was not found in the church in martyr times; for holy men and women came forward and confessed their faith with more than common eagerness.

If the narrative had ended where we left it last Sunday, what a quietus it would have afforded to those good, peace-loving people who, in these days of blasphemy and rebuke, will take no sides at all! "Anything for a quiet life." They are very comfortable, and mean to remain so. What does it matter to them though the whole church should be rotten with error? They hope to go quietly to heaven—indeed, they feel they are going there; and, if they are not soldiers of the cross, yet they trust they are followers of the Lamb; if they do not contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, yet still they eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and enjoy the privileges of a comfortable religion. That is the present policy of many, and gladly enough would they have sheltered themselves behind this woman. She, however, was not hid, nor may they be. We have enough apologies for selfishness and ease, and compromise, without the Saviour's supplying us with one; and so he took special care in this instance that nothing so evil should be made out of it. What might have been a defence for guilty silence he turns into a grand argument for open confession. He will not allow concealment in this case, because he will not tolerate it in any case, but will have us take up our cross and follow him.

That is the subject for this morning: may I be helped of the Holy Spirit so to handle it, that any here who are sincere in their love to Christ, but yet have never avowed it, may be forced to come out at once, and before the Lord Jesus Christ and his people declare that they have touched him, and that they have been healed immediately.

Let me say to you, *her hiding seemed very excusable;* but, secondly, *her hiding was not permitted;* and, thirdly, *your hiding should not be excused nor permitted, but should come to an end at once.*

I. First, then, we say concerning this woman, that HER HIDING SEEMED VERY EXCUSABLE. I have already said that if, in any instance, a cure might have been concealed, this was one; and it was so for many reasons. First, because of *this woman's natural timidity, and because of the nature of her malady.* It would appear that if in any case the thing might have been done in a corner, or if done in a crowd, might have been passed over without remark, this was an evident case in point. Yet the Saviour, tenderly considerate as he is, will not have it so. And you, dear friend, may say, "I am naturally so very timid and retiring; pray excuse me." This woman was not only bashful, but her sickness made her rightly wish to remain in obscurity. "I should not like my story to be known," says one. She might have justly said the same: it must have been hard indeed for her to confess what the Lord had done. Yet she had to acknowledge his grace openly,

and so must you. She is a woman sick and faint, who for twelve years has been growing weaker and weaker, yet when she is healed she must come forward and confess the cure. Does this seem hard to you? Surely it is the least she can do, and she ought to do it of her own accord. Yet if silence might have been allowed in any case, hers was so delicate a matter that she might have had the doubtful privilege of receiving mercy without acknowledging it.

In addition to this, remember that *the Saviour did not court publicity*. He laid no injunction upon those whom he healed that they should tell everyone of the marvel. He did not seek fame or observation: he did not strive nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. In several cases he bade the healed ones tell no man what was done; and in this case he had given the cure without any open request for it. Might she not from this conclude that her secret act of faith was approved, and that it might continue secret, since it had gained the boon? You may reason in that way about yourself, and say that Jesus does not need that you should testify for him. Indeed, it is true that he does not need anything of any of us; but is this a fit way of treating your Lord? You may say that quietude on your part would be excusable; but as the Saviour did not think so in this woman's case, I believe that he will not think so in your case. I trust that in his mercy he will deal with you as with her, and compel you to come out and own the wonders of his grace.

There was another reason why she might have thought she need not make a public confession, and that was, that *the Saviour was at that time exceedingly occupied*. The multitude thronged him, and he was on the way to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, to attend to his child; she would only be stopping him in his career of love. Should the Saviour be detained for her? Already Jairus did not look upon her very cheerfully when he saw that Jesus stopped for her; what would he do if she caused a still longer delay? Besides, she might naturally argue, "Why should such an insignificant person as I am detain the prophet? What am I that I should take up even a second of his time? Jairus is before me; let him take his turn. I have the blessing, and there is no need to detain the Lord." You know how ready we are to make excuses when a duty is not pleasant: I suppose you are very handy at it yourself. But now since this excuse, if it ever occurred to the woman, was soon disposed of, I would advise you also to cast away all subterfuges, and remember that it is written, "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved," or quoting an equally plain Scripture, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The faith and the confession are put together by the Holy Spirit: what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

Excuse might also have been found for the healed woman in the fact, that *her cure would make itself known by its results*. When she reached home everybody would see that she was quite another person; and when they asked how it came to pass, she could tell them all about it. They would see in her life the best evidence of the work of our Lord upon her. Is it not better to speak by your life than by your lips? Exactly so, and herein lies the apparent force of this excuse for disobedience. It

needs some truth to keep a falsehood on its legs. Note well that this woman was not permitted to withhold the open avowal of her indebtedness to Christ, even though it was certain that her health and her conduct would witness to his power. I know what you say: "I need not join a church: I can be a Christian at home. Better live a Christian life than wear a Christian name." My friend, we never proposed to you that you should put the wearing of a Christian name in the place of a Christian life—we have solemnly spoken the reverse of such a notion. We would earnestly remind you of our Saviour's words, "These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." Attention to one duty is no justification for the neglect of another. I charge you, disobey not in any point. Confess your Lord; own what he has done for you; and be sure that the outcome of your life supports your confession. Have the shaft of godly living by all means, but crown it with the capital of a brave confession.

Another pretext might have served this woman, if she desired an excuse. She might truthfully have said, "It is evident that *an open confession is not essential to my cure, for I am cured.*" She was healed immediately, and it is added, that she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague: so that she knew that she was healed, and it was clear that an avowal of her faith was not necessary to her receiving that great boon from the Lord. Hence, many argue, "To confess Christ and join with his people is not necessary to my salvation." Who said it was? Open confession is not necessary, nay, is not permitted, till you are saved. How could this woman have made any confession of a cure till she was cured? But being cured, it then became necessary that she should confess it: not necessary to the cure, that is clear, but necessary because of the cure. It is always necessary for a disciple to do what his Lord bids him. It is essential for a soldier of the cross to follow his Captain's orders. Jesus bids us let our light shine; dare we hide it away? If we have received grace at his hands he would have us confess that we have received it, and surely our sense of justice makes it needful for us to own our obligation.

Thus I have shown you that in her case many excuses might have been made; and yet, after all, it would not have been a fitting thing if she had stolen away in the crowd, and gone home cured without praising and blessing her Lord. It would have been to her everlasting dishonour. I think she felt this when the Saviour fixed those dear eyes of his upon her and said, "Somebody hath touched me." What a vision of lovingkindness and peace it was to her! In a moment she must have thought, "How foolish I was to go behind him! The very look of his face is comfort, the glance of his eye is joy. He would have granted my request with a smile." When she saw what he was like, and perceived the right royal bearing of The Bountiful One, she blushed that she had thought to steal a cure from one so ready to give it. The sight of him was rebuke enough for her clandestine snatching at the blessing. As to going away then without thanking him, why, methinks the moment she saw his majestic mercy, the divine royalty of his goodness, she could not do otherwise than

fall at his feet and worship such a glorious Lord. Within herself she felt that it was a marvellous cure which had come to her by a touch of him, and she could not praise him enough. The stones would have cried out against her if she had not confessed his miracle of gracious power, and the earth would have refused to bear up such a monster of ingratitude. Instantly she fell down before him, and told him all the truth. The thoughts of her heart were revealed by her Lord, and never was Jesus more truly adored than by this poor creature, whose silence stood rebuked by her Lord's love, and condemned by his immeasurable goodness.

II. Secondly, HER HIDING WAS NOT PERMITTED BY THE SAVIOUR. I told you, in the opening of the discourse, that to have let her story finish without bringing her out would have been an encouragement to that practical denial of Christ which consists in concealing our faith in him. The unearthing of this woman from her hiding-place was wrought by the Saviour himself, and therefore, with all its apparent roughness, we may be sure that it was the kindest thing that could have been done. Her being brought out had the best of consequences.

For, first, an open confession on her part was needful *in reference to the Lord's glory*. Beloved, the miracles of Christ were the seals which God gave to his mission. He was a man sent of God, and the wondrous things that he did proved that God was with him. If the wonders which he wrought were not made known, the seals of his mission would have been concealed, and so would have lost much of their effect. How would men know that he was the very Christ, if they never heard that the sick were healed? If this woman concealed her cure others might do the same; and if they all did it, then Christ's commission would have no visible endorsement from the Lord God. I should like to impress this idea upon those of you who do not confess your Lord: whatever is right for you to do is right for other people to do. If it is right for one Christian not to confess Christ, and join a church, it must be allowable for other Christians to do the same. Where would be churches, where would be the continuance of gospel ordinances; and for the matter of that, who would be bound to be a preacher if no one is even bound to make an open profession? If *you* may go to heaven by the backstairs so may I, and God's grand entrance to the kingdom may be deserted. Who will care to go to heaven by the open way, with all its responsibility and opposition, if you can just as easily take the snug road behind the hedges, and slink into glory without observation? It will not do, brethren, if we consider what the Lord Jesus Christ deserves of us, and how our open confession tends to certify his mission. The change wrought in the spiritual and moral condition of the saved is God's attestation of the gospel; and if this is not to be spoken of, how is the world to know that God has sent the gospel at all?

Further, remember that *our Lord's miracles were illustrative of his teaching*. Properly viewed, the miracles of Christ are the pictures of a volume of which his sermons are the letterpress. You take *The Illustrated London News*, and you get the description of a public building, or the account of a grand ceremony: you are glad of the printed account, but you are much helped to form an idea of the whole business by the engravings. You would not like to lose the woodcut,

which is the chief feature of value in the paper. Now, in our Saviour's ministry his words were the letterpress, and his miracles were the engravings. If the engraving is to be torn away, or pasted over, a great injury is done to the paper; and even so our Lord's teaching would be greatly marred if its miracles were concealed. I showed you, last Lord's-day morning, that the healing of this woman was a wonderfully instructive incident; how could it remain unknown? Must it be passed over to gratify her fear? Must Jesus work this wonder, and nobody ever hear about it? As God is seen in his works of creation, Jesus is seen in his miracles of grace. Shall we rob him of his glory? God forbid that we should do him this serious dishonour. When first I knew the Lord, if anybody had said to me, "You will be ashamed to confess Christ although he has saved you. The day will come when you will blush to own his name," I should have felt indignant at the suggestion. Why, I wanted to tell everybody of the Saviour's love. If there had been nobody else to hear me, I should have had to tell the cat. I felt like Bunyan did when he said he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land all about it. I cannot understand how it is that you who know the Saviour, or think you do, can imagine it to be right to hide away, and cover up the glory of Christ. Oh, tell it! Tell it all the world over that he has healed us, forgiven us, and saved us.

But the confession had to be made *for the sake of others*. Do any of you wish to live unto yourselves? If you do, you need saving from selfishness. I have seen it brought as a charge against evangelical religion that we teach men to look to their own salvation first, and that this is a kind of spiritual selfishness. Ah, but if that salvation means salvation from selfishness, where is the selfishness of it? It is a very material point in salvation to be saved from hardness of heart and carelessness about others. Do you want to go to heaven alone? I fear you will never go there. Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that. What is the most natural plan to use for the salvation of others but to bear your own personal testimony? Our Lord healed this woman for the good of the whole crowd. They must have all been astonished when they heard her story. He did it especially for the good of Jairus. Jairus' little daughter had been living twelve years, and this poor woman had been dying twelve years—note the exact time in each case. Surely there was a loud call to Jairus in this cure to exercise faith in Jesus, and it must have greatly helped his faith, which was not quite so strong as it seemed.

Do you not think that her public declaration was required *for the good of our Lord's disciples?* When they heard her story, did they not treasure it up, and speak of it to one another in after days, and thereby strengthen each other's faith? The remembrance of these remarkable miracles, which they saw their Master work, would serve them in good stead in times of persecution. Beloved, had not the Lord an eye even to you and to me, who were to be born by his grace centuries later on? Do you not think that he fetched the healed one out on purpose that this being put into the gospel might bring out hidden ones throughout all generations? Did not our Lord foresee that

many would be encouraged to touch the hem of his garment by faith through hearing of her cure? Thus, you see, the trembling woman must own her Lord, that her Lord's household may be blest thereby.

But especially she had to do this *for her own good.* The Saviour had designs of love in bringing this poor trembler forward before all the people. By this he saved her from a host of fears which would have haunted her. Suppose she had gone home healed, and had never confessed it; surely she would have felt uneasy? A sense of having stolen the boon without leave or license would have caused her uneasy dreams and sad apprehensions. She would worry herself with the fear that the disease would soon return again, or that she would die from a fearful judgment. Besides, she would have said to herself, "I was little better than a thief. I did not come in by the door, but climbed over the wall. I am afraid it will go hard with me at the day of judgment. Will a man rob God? Have not I robbed the Saviour himself?" All such fears were rendered impossible by her open confession, and that which followed upon it. Jesus assured her that he had taken no offence; he wished her to have no fears, for, said he, "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

She had been a very timid and trembling woman, but now she would shake off all improper timidity. I have known many persons cured of timidity by coming forward to confess Christ. I could mention cases of persons who have been very retiring, and scarcely able to say a word upon any subject, but when they joined the church and were baptized, their open confession broke the ice, and the waters of their life were set in motion. Our Lord removes this infirmity by our obedience: "in keeping his commandments there is great reward."

Our Lord also gave her an increased blessing after her confession. Perhaps the Lord is reserving some great favour for some of you when you avow his name. You hide indoors, and he allows you milk enough to live upon; but if you would come out and confess him, he would feed you with the strong meat of the kingdom. You would become a braver and more useful person if you would take up your cross. You are now like Saul, the son of Kish, hiding among the stuff: come out and be a king. Confess what Christ has done for you. For what did the Saviour give her?

He gave her clearly to know her relationship to him. He said, "Daughter"! I do not know that the Saviour ever called any other woman daughter, for he was guarded in his speech to women; but to this one woman he said, "Daughter." Oh, may the Lord give trembling ones to see and feel the near and dear relationship which exists between Christ and their souls! May your sonship come up before your minds most vividly, as a reward of obedience. May Jesus say to some of you, "Son, be of good comfort"; or to another, "Daughter, be of good cheer, thy faith hath saved thee." "What would I give," says one, "if Jesus would call me "daughter"! Give him your whole self by believing in him, and confession of him, and see if he does not reveal to you his love. What choice revelations you lose through sinful silence I cannot tell you; but assuredly you miss many a cheering word from your Lord's own lip. If you will not

own him, how can you expect him to give you the spirit of adoption? If you receive instead the spirit of bondage you cannot wonder.

Next note that our Lord gave her joyousness. He said, "Daughter, be of good comfort." Smooth those wrinkles from thy brow, my daughter.

> "Why should the children of a king
> Go mourning all their days?"

"Be of good comfort." Ah, friends! you hang your heads. Perhaps if you had grace enough to own Jesus more fully, you would hold your heads up, and the sun would shine into your faces, and you would march joyfully all the rest of your lives. I advise you to try it. One of the best medicines for low spirits will be found in a courageous obedience to Jesus. Keep close to the Crucified, and your own cross will grow light in fellowship with him.

Next notice that he gave a commendation to her faith: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Why, it was not her faith which made her whole, was it? No, but Jesus puts his own crown upon the head of faith. It is always safe for Jesus to crown faith, because faith always crowns Jesus. Her faith would answer, "Lord, I did nothing, thou didst it all," and, therefore, Jesus ascribes her healing to her faith. How much I desire that you, who are now afraid of your own faith, would win your Lord's praise by coming out and bearing witness to what he has done for you! Then will you not only believe, but also know that you have believed, and end for ever your present state of miserable doubt.

Then the Lord gave her a word of precious quieting. He said, "Go in peace." As much as to say: Do not stop in this crowd, to be pushed about or stared at, but go home in quiet. Go home to your house, and to your friends, with a light heart. All is well. You enjoy my favour. I have called you daughter, and I will never disown you. I have blessed you, and you shall be blessed. I give you peace on earth and peace in heaven. O you that do love the Lord, and trust him, but yet have never declared your faith according to his command, you say, "We do not know how it is, but while we hear of God's people having great peace we do not enjoy it." You cannot expect to have peace, and yet be disobedient. If you do not side with Jesus, do you expect him to be at your side? You shall have bread and water, so that your soul shall be kept alive; but you cannot taste the wines on the lees, nor the fat things full of marrow, so long as you do not confess your Lord. The dainties of the cupboard are not for disobedient children. Are you ashamed of Jesus? How, then, can you expect him to give you the kisses of his mouth? That he should save you will be more than his promise; but as he loves you, he must and will discipline you unless you confess his name and his work. Why do you lose present comfort by neglect? All in the train of faith will go to heaven; but why do so many ride third-class, or even get into cattle-trucks? Why not ride first-class? To be out-and-out for Christ is to ride first-class. Confess your Lord. Determine never to hide your colours. Be heart and soul a Christian Live for Jesus, and be ready to die for him:

this is to go to heaven first-class; and why should you not? Why will you be fretting and fuming, moaning and mourning, when you might as well be singing and dancing and feasting in the presence of your Lord and his household? Do you hesitate to own your Lord and Master? Ah, me! how shall I sufficiently grieve over you? Let not another day pass over your head till you have left Cowards' Castle and come into the ranks of the army of the Lord of hosts.

III. Thus I have already reached my last point: YOUR HIDING OUGHT TO BE ENDED. "Whom are you speaking to, sir?" Well, not to you, dear friends, who are always to the front, lifting the banner of the cross. "Whom are you speaking to, sir?" To you, my friend, if you are really a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. If you keep yourself to yourself, it is to you that I am speaking, and I desire to press upon you your obligations. *What owest thou to my Lord?* You are washed from your uncleanness. You are clothed with the robe of righteousness. You are accepted in the Beloved. You know that you have passed from death to life. Unless fearfully mistaken, you know that you are the Lord's. Well, then, own it. Do not be ashamed to take your place in the cross-bearing procession, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. By your love to Jesus, do not turn to the right, seeking your own ease; nor to the left, aiming at the peace of others, but go straight on where duty and Jesus lead you. This is still the way to honour and immortality.

Do you not think *you owe something to the church of God*, which kept the gospel alive in the world for you to hear? Did not a band of godly men and women meet together, and see that the gospel was preached? Was it not so that you were saved? Should you not help to keep that church going by whose means you were brought to Jesus?

May I be permitted also to say, I think *you owe something to the minister who led you to Jesus?* What a cheer it is to us when we get a letter from one who has found the Lord through our teaching; and better still, when face to face we meet one who has trusted the Saviour through our poor instrumentality! Those who are sowers of the seed know what a joy it is to see it spring up. Who are the people who cause us needless depression? Who are those who withhold needful encouragement? Why, those who do not come out and tell what grace has done for them. For the sake of those who labour among you in word and doctrine, I beseech you come forward. Common gratitude should lead you to let us know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Besides, *you owe it to yourselves.* Are you going to be mere bats, fluttering out when none will observe you, and hiding from the light? Are you going to be like mice, which only come out at night to nibble in the pantry? Quit yourselves like men! O you that are hidden in the clefts of the rocks, let the Saviour hear your voices, and see your countenances!

You owe it to your family. You should tell your household what grace has done for you. Many a person wonders that his sons and daughters do not turn out well, when he himself has never been openly on the Lord's side. "Oh," says one, "but then I am right in my heart,"

But is the light within to be shut up in a dark lantern? Who is to read a closed book? We want to see in the shop-window of your life some of the goods which are stored in the warehouse of your heart, or how can you trade for your Lord? When a man boldly says, "I believe in Jesus," and proves it by his actions, it has a holy influence upon his children, his servants, his companions: do you not desire to influence them aright?

Do you not think *you owe it to your neighbours to show your colours?* Why, there are whole streets in this city where scarcely a single person goes to a place of public worship. Should he slink there as if half ashamed of it? What is to become of us if the little salt loses its savour? There are regions in this city in which dwell hundreds of thousands of inhabitants in which attendance at public worship is so scanty that the churches and chapels have only a sprinkling of people. Should not you that love the Lord be very earnest to let it be known that there is still a God to be worshipped, a Saviour to be trusted? In these evil days above all others—

> "Ye that are men now serve him,
> Against unnumbered foes;
> Your courage rise with danger,
> And strength to strength oppose."

Many crowd around him when Christ is on the winning hand. What is the worth of their hosannas? The style of man that a crucified Christ delights in is he who follows his Lord in the day of blasphemy and reproach. A true soldier of Jesus can stand up for his Lord alone. He is as true to Jesus when he is the only one as he would be if all the million went after him. Blessed is he who is not offended with Jesus, nor ashamed of his cross. O ye saved ones, run up your colours; fly them at the mast-head, nail them there; and never let the enemy take them down. Oh that God would move every one here that has been a little shy or backward to go without the camp and bear the Lord's reproach!

Now let me *hear some of your objections, and answer them.* I hope I have been answering them all through my sermon. Here is one. "Well, you know, Mr. Spurgeon, I am such an insignificant person. It cannot make any difference what I do." Yes, and this woman was a very insignificant person—only a woman! When I speak thus in English, it is a very ungallant speech, but if a Rabbi had said it in Christ's day, it would not have seemed at all out of place, for they taught that no holy person ought, in the streets, to allow a woman's dress to touch him, lest he should be defiled thereby. They thought that if a scribe tried to teach a woman the law, he dishonoured the law by doing so. Religious men lightly esteemed women in the Saviour's day. Our divine Lord never gave the slightest sanction to such an abominable spirit, and I am not going to lend any sanction to your saying "I am only a poor feeble woman." God thinks much of the lowly: you must not talk so. Besides, many of you do not think so meanly of yourselves as you pretend to do when you want to avoid your duty. Do not excuse yourselves through pretended humility. If the Lord bought you with his blood, you are not so insignificant that you can be allowed to deny him your service.

"But coming out and joining a church, and all that, is such an ordeal." So it may be. In this woman's case, it was a far greater ordeal than it can be to you. Picture her, with her delicacy of feeling, called into the midst of all that crowd to confess her cure! Ready to sink into the earth! An unclean person who had broken the ceremonial law! How she longed to hide herself away! Yet the tender Lord, for her own sake, would have her stand forth, and what seemed an ordeal became a joy. Jesus does not excuse one of his healed ones from owning the work of his grace. A dear lady, who has long since gone to glory, was once an honoured member of this church: it was Lady Burgoyne, and when she wished to unite with us she said to me, "Dear sir, I cannot go before the church. It is more than I can manage to make a confession of Christ before the members." I told her that we could make no exception for anybody, and especially not for her, who was so well established in the faith that she could surely answer a few questions before those who were brethren and sisters in the Lord. She came bravely, and spoke most sweetly for her Lord. Some of you may remember her, with her sweet countenance, and venerable bearing. When she had owned her Lord, she put both her hands on mine, and said emphatically, "With all my heart I thank you for this; I shall never be ashamed of Christ now. When aristocratic friends call upon me I will speak to them of my Lord." She did so constantly. You never found her slow to introduce the gospel, whoever might be with her. She frequently said to me, "Oh, what a training that was for me! I might have been a timid one all my days if I had not made that confession before the church." Now I say to you, if it be an ordeal, undergo it for Christ's sake. But, indeed, it should be a pleasure to own your Lord among his own disciples.

"Alas!" says one, "I could not tell of what the Lord has done for me, because mine is such a sorrowful story. You know what I used to be, sir, sovereign grace has made me to differ, but my former life silences me!" Was it not so with this woman? How could she tell her story? But then it was to the glory of God, and so "she told him all the truth." Whatever you were before you were converted, never boast of it; but at the same time do not deny it, but honour your Saviour. Remember how often Paul tells us what he was before conversion. If any rake up your old sin, answer that it is sadly true, but you have been washed, and much has been forgiven you. Own that you were the chief of sinners, and that even now you are less than the least of all saints, but the Lord has brought you from death to life to the glory of his name.

"I have so little to tell," says one. That is a good reason why you should tell it, for it will be all the easier for you to do so. He that has little to tell should tell it straight away. I will give you no other answer than that. But still, if you can tell that the Lord Jesus has washed you in his precious blood, I do not think it is a little thing to tell. If you can say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see," say it, and do not think it a little thing. Once you thought it the greatest fact you could possibly know: think so still. Don't garnish the story, but state it just as it happened.

"But perhaps people may not believe me." Did I tell you that

you were to make them believe you? Is that your business? You are to do right, whatever the consequences may be. But they will believe you, if you deserve to be believed. When we meet together as believers, and hear the story of a sinner saved by grace, we are none of us suspicious; sometimes we are a little too quick to believe, and are apt to be deceived. Do not fear that you will be distrusted. Confess your faith at any rate, and God will bless your testimony.

"Ah!" says one, "but suppose after I had confessed Christ I should become as bad as ever." Suppose that this woman had supposed such a sad thing, and had said, "O Lord I cannot confess that thou hast healed me, for I do not know how I may be in six months' time." She was not so mistrustful. "But suppose the Lord should leave me, and suffer me to leave him." Yes, and suppose you were to leave off supposing anything of the sort, and just take his promise as it stands. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do you believe his word? Then lay aside such suspicions. Jesus does not give us a trumpery, temporary salvation; he does not save us for a quarter of a year and then leave us. If saved by him, you will be for ever saved! He is the Author of eternal salvation. If he gives you a new heart, it is a new heart, and will never become an old one. If he puts the water of life within you, he does not put it there as you sprinkle the pavement before your shop in the morning, which is soon dried up, but he says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." When I trusted Christ, I did not trust him to save me for a year or two, but for ever. When you go the heavenly journey, take a ticket all the way through. Some of our friends take a ticket to the next station, and then rush out to get another. Take your ticket for the New Jerusalem, and not for a half-way-house. The train will never break down, and the track will never be torn up. If you can trust Jesus Christ to carry you through to glory, he will do it. Let not that fear disturb you.

"Ah!" says one more, "it seems too good to be true. I cannot think that such a one as I may dare to link myself with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is so great and so glorious." Yet this is your only hope. You are only saved through being in Christ. This may be too great, too good for us to imagine, but then we need not imagine it; it is clearly revealed in the infallible Word of God. He that believeth in Jesus is one with him. Come, then, and own that blessed oneness.

Be one with Christ to-day in his humiliation, and you shall be one with him by-and-by in his glory. Be despised and ridiculed for his sake, and you shall be honoured and glorified with him in the day when he appeareth. God bless you for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Corinthians i.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—424, 674, 671.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?"

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 22ND, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?"—Jeremiah xxxii. 26, 27.

THIS method of questioning the person to be instructed is known to teachers as the Socratic method. Socrates was wont, not so much to state a fact, as to ask a question and draw out thoughts from those whom he taught. His method had long before been used by a far greater teacher. Putting questions is Jehovah's frequent method of instruction. When the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind it was with a series of questions. "Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?" and so forth.

Questions from the Lord are very often the strongest affirmations. He would have us perceive their absolute certainty. They are put in this particular form because he would have us think over his great thought, and confirm it by our own reflections. The Lord shines upon us in the question, and our answer to it is the reflection of his light. The Infallible One challenges a contradiction, or even a doubt. "Is anything too hard for me?" is the strongest way of saying that nothing can be too hard for him, for it proclaims defiance to heaven, and earth, and hell, to produce a difficulty which can perplex the Lord.

I invite you, therefore, dear friends, to turn the question over in your minds till the omnipotence of Jehovah shall be your one all-absorbing thought. You cannot think of anything which renders it necessary to put a foot-note to the text. Search ye well, and see if it needs qualification. See whether there is an exception to the rule of absolute omnipotence. Revolve the divine question long and well—"Is anything too hard for me?" May your thoughts be awake at this time! May the truth of the text take possession of your minds, and fill them with its fragrance even as the woman's box of ointment filled the room with its perfume!

I. I shall ask you first to consider the wonderful question of our text which the Lord put to the prophet, VIEWING IT AS NECESSARY.

The utterance of these words was no superfluity, there was need for them to be spoken. Flesh is frail, and mortal minds are forgetful; and Jeremiah, great as he was, was but a man.

It was needful to tell the prophet this, *though he knew it.* He never doubted that the Lord is Almighty, and yet it was needful for Jehovah himself to speak home this truth to his mind and heart. It is often necessary for the Lord himself to drive home a truth into the mind of his most faithful servant. None can teach as the Lord teaches. Truth is never fully known by the sons of Zion until the Lord teaches it to them; hence it is written, "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord." We learn much in many ways, but we learn nothing vitally and practically till the Spirit of God becomes our schoolmaster. The God of truth must teach us the truth of God or we shall never learn it. Jeremiah knew this truth in his inmost soul; see the seventeenth verse of this chapter: "I prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." He expressed the truth admirably, and yet the Lord saw it needful to give him a special divine revelation, to impress it more fully upon his heart. Brethren, it is one thing to know that such a doctrine is true, and quite another thing to know the truth itself. We need to be persuaded of it so as to embrace it. It is a glorious thing to see truth blaze out as if written in letters of fire. We are far too apt to put truth down in our creed, and after that to shut it away from practical every-day use. We believe it, and we should be indignant if anybody disputed it; and yet we ignore it. Truth laid upon the shelf is as good as unknown. Doctrines which are disputed often have the most influence upon the community, because they are brought clearly before men's minds; and being threshed out, they yield seed for the sower and bread for the eater. We read in one of the Epistles, "I put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." There is a proverb which says that "Truth is mighty, and will prevail." That is true, as far as it goes; but truth may be formally admitted and then it may be laid aside, and so may never prevail. It is ill to treat a truth like some great Egyptian king, who is swathed in fine linen, embalmed with precious spices, and pompously placed in the tomb with other honourable mummies. The Lord would not have the truth of his own omnipotence thus dealt with, and therefore he cometh forth from his secret place, and speaks personally to his servant, saying, "Is anything too hard for me?" May the Lord do the same with us in reference to the precious truths of his gospel! May the Holy Spirit himself take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us; then shall we see them in their own light, and know them as divine realities!

But I go a step further, and say, that it is necessary for us to be thus specially instructed, even *though we know a truth well enough to plead it in prayer*, as Jeremiah did when he cried "There is nothing too hard for thee." That man is no mean scholar in the classes of Christ who has learned to handle Scriptural truths when pleading with the Lord. Oh, that we used more argument in prayer! Prayers are weak when they lack pleadings. "Bring forth your strong reasons,

saith the Lord." The sinews of prayer are the holy arguments which we urge with the Lord, such as his own promises and our great needs, his own glory, his covenant, the malice of the enemy, and so forth. We know great truths well when we see their bearing towards God in supplication; and yet, though we may be able to plead it in supplication, we may not even then know the truth to the full. O men of God, ye that are fathers in Israel, may the Holy Spirit still teach you, till you know all the power and fulness of his truth. In lowliness of spirit I doubt not that you still cry—

> "I find myself a learner yet,
> Unstable, weak, and apt to slide."

May the Comforter continually bring to your remembrance the things which Jesus has told you, till you know the heart and soul of them. Ye gracious mothers in Israel, may God reveal himself to you more and more, and even those truths which you already plead in your closet may he yet cause you to realize more vividly still. May you weave songs as well as prayers out of the truth of God. This truth of his omnipotence, may he come and speak it to our hearts as he did to the heart of Jeremiah, "Behold, I am Jehovah, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?"

But I must yet go a step further. It is necessary for God thus to reveal truth individually to each of our hearts *even though we may have acted on it.* Jeremiah had acted on the fact that nothing was too hard for God. He had but very little money; and in days of famine and pestilence money was very precious. A morsel of bread was worth silver during the siege. Poor Jeremiah had not many shekels, and those shekels would all be wanted in one way and another for the necessaries of life; and yet he had counted into the scales the price of a piece of land at Anathoth, which he would probably never see, much less enjoy. The Lord had bidden him do so, and he had done it without demur. Beloved, it is a great thing to be a little child before God, unquestioningly obedient to our Father's will. We may not calculate consequences, nor estimate difficulties; we are to do what the Lord tells us, as he tells us, when he tells us. O ye Jeremiahs, it is

> "Yours not to reason why,
> Yours at all price to buy."

Jeremiah did not doubt, debate, or even delay. He signed the deed, and took care to have it properly preserved. If you see any difficulty, obey the Lord first, and seek an explanation afterwards, for so the prophet did. He obeyed in the full confidence that nothing was too hard for God. After his obedience, he began to look back on what he had done, and to be considerably bewildered, while trying to make out how God would justify what he had done. Elijah himself was faint, though he had taken the prophets of Baal and slain them before the Lord: but the faintness came after the conflict, and not before it. This is much the best time for faintness, if we faint at all. He was the prophet of fire, a man of iron firmness for his Master, yet after the strong excitement had passed, he was overcome, and it was needful

for his Lord to revive him. The best of men are men at the best. If the Lord lifts you up into the purity and dignity of a child-like faith, yet you will have your moments when you will cry, "Lord, speak to me thyself again, even though it be out of the whirlwind; and let me know that I have done all these things according to thy word, and not after my own fancy." Even the practice of truth does not raise us above the need of having it again and again laid home to the soul.

So, you see, our gracious God applies to our hearts the truth which we know, which we plead, and which we practise, that it may come even yet more fully into our soul, and abide there.

Another necessity for this arises out of *further manifestations with which we are to be favoured.* God had caused Jeremiah to know his omnipotence so far, but he was to see still more of it. Faith has led you into marvellous places; but there are greater things before you, and the Lord presses truth upon you that you may receive more of it. Did you ever climb a mountain? A friend of mine, when among the Alps, asserted confidently that he could reach the top of a certain mountain in half-an-hour. It certainly looked very near us, but my eye had been better educated to estimate distances among mountains, and I assured him that it would take him all the day to stand upon that ridge. The fact is, that when you have climbed one stiff bit of hill you find yourself bound to go down into a valley before you can tackle the next ascent. There are hills above hills, and one summit is a sort of look-out from which you see that you have much further to go. That which looked like a part of the side of the hill may really be a mountain by itself; and when you have ascended it, you have the cheering privilege of seeing that you are now at the bottom of the next. In fact, although you are decidedly higher, you often seem to have further to go than when you started. It is just so with our experience of divine things: when we know the Lord to the full of our capacity, that capacity enlarges, and we begin to learn again. We know more, and for that very reason are far more conscious of our ignorance than we were at the first. The Lord himself came to his servant Jeremiah, and thus prepared him for those greater things which he was about to reveal. The Lord had told him what to do, and he had done it, and thus he had believed up to the highest degree of that which was revealed to him; and therefore the Lord was going to reward his obedient faith by committing to him other mysteries and prophecies of the future. The city was to be burned and to be destroyed. God would wash out the footprints of sin in the blood of the sinners; and lay their land utterly waste; and yet the day would come when the scattered people would come back, and lands and vineyards would be bought and sold, whereof the buying of the field at Anathoth was a type and a pledge. Then the Lord would restore the nation to more than its former prosperity, and make with the people an everlasting covenant that he would not turn away from them to do them good, and would put his fear in their hearts that they should not depart from him. All that he had already believed would prepare Jeremiah to believe in this amazing blessing. Possibly some of you imagine that it would be an easy thing for him to believe well of Israel; but, indeed, you forget how the people had treated

him. He had been dealing with them patiently and tearfully for many years, and they had proved a most perverse, rebellious, and cruel people. They had jested at his tears, disbelieved his prophecies, and refused his warnings. He was even then in prison for having spoken the truth. So that it needed that God himself should come to him and cheer him as to these people, saying, "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?" The stiffnecked people could be brought to obedience, and should be, for the Lord himself would do it. The Lord would take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and make them a lovingly obedient people. This was impossible with Jeremiah, but possible with Jehovah. He will yet be glorified even in the midst of those who have dishonoured him, and despised his prophets.

Thus you see how wise it was of the Lord to repeat to his servant that which he knew, pleaded, and acted on, that he might be made to believe still more fully in the all-sufficiency of the Lord his God.

II. Under the second head of our discourse we shall look at the text REGARDING IT AS DECISIVE.

"Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?" This argument is decisive. For *the argument is fetched from the Lord himself.* Note this. In his prayer, Jeremiah drew his encouragement from what the Lord had done. Observe, "Ah Lord God! Behold, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." Creation is a fine argument. The God that made the heavens and the earth without help from any can surely do anything he pleases. He who made the mountains, and the sea, and the isles thereof can do anything. He who created the skies and made the stars also in the far-off space—those great and mighty orbs—what is there that he cannot do? This was good argument for Jeremiah; but Jehovah does not point to his works, nor quote creation nor providence: he speaks of himself: the source of all, whence a thousand earths and heavens might flow like streams from a fountain. There it stands in its majestic simplicity: "I am Jehovah." When we look to God alone, and think, by the help of his Spirit, of who he is and what he must be, then we realize that nothing can be too hard for him. Alas, what feeble notions we have of God! I dare say we think that we magnify him, but in reality we belittle him with our highest thoughts. When we go down to the sea of trial, and do business on great waters of trouble, we find that we know little enough of God. When we see his wonders on the deep we are astonished and overwhelmed, and if one of his storms should arise our faith is staggered. If we did but rise to an idea of God, if we could but form a fair idea of the immeasurable greatness of his power, doubt and mistrust would become impossible. "Is anything too hard for me?" saith Jehovah. Meditate much upon the divine Father, Creator and Preserver; upon the divine Son, the risen Redeemer, who hath all power in heaven and in earth; upon the sacred Spirit, of whom the rushing mighty wind in the tornado is but a faint symbol, and you will feel that here is the source of all might. "I am Jehovah." The argument takes you to

himself, and coming to you from his own mouth the reason is a decisive one.

But he means us also to see the argument as *founded on his name*, "I am Jehovah." I am always sorry that our revisers had not the courage of their knowledge, and had left the divine name as it is in the original Hebrew, and given us the word "Jehovah" where they usually put LORD. It is a name of awe and glory, and the Christian church must get back to it, and return more distinctly to the worship of Jehovah. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, this God is our God for ever and ever; and we might more clearly have recognized this, if the incommunicable name had been preserved to us in our version of the sacred Scriptures.

The name brings out the personality of God. Those who say that there is no God, are, some of them, forced to admit that there is a central force, a power which makes for righteousness. They talk of an impersonal something, but we believe in a personal God, and he who has no personal God has, in truth, no God at all. I cannot call an unknown force my Father, and I cannot address my trust or my prayer to it. *It*, indeed! The Creator of persons an *it!* We want *him*, a person, a conscious, thinking, acting personality. This we have here: "I am Jehovah." The name signifies self-existence. God does not exist because of his surroundings: he draws nothing from without, his life is in himself. He derives no support or aid from anything outside of himself; indeed, there is nothing which has not come of him. All things were made by him, and he sustaineth all things by the word of his power.

The name of Jehovah reminds us that he has within himself sufficiency for all his will; he hath adequate power of performance for all his purposes and decrees; Jehovah wills, and it is done. He has created legions of angels, but he borrows nothing from them. He can truly say, "I am, and there is none beside me." Those mysterious living creatures which are nearest to his throne are his creatures, and not his helpers. The best instructed and the most willing of his servants, derive their all from him, but supply him with nothing. Remembering the name, Shaddai, God all-sufficient, we understand all the better his question, "Is anything too hard for me?" He lays the burden of the question upon his own self; the whole stress of that which is hard in itself, and too hard for others, he meets with that word, "I am Jehovah." All the power that can possibly be required in any imaginable case is in that name "Jehovah"! It is an immeasurable word: the eagle's wing cannot rise to its height; he that dives into the abyss cannot reach its depth. Jehovah's name is higher than heaven, deeper than hell, broader than space, and greater than all things. What can we know of this infinite word, "I am Jehovah"?

Moreover, the name sets forth the truth that he is immutable: he is "I am that I am." Time does not affect him, nor change come near him. He is never less than Jehovah; he cannot be more. We may at any moment of the darkest night rest as confidently upon the I AM as in the brightest day.

In fact, the meaning of that glorious word is infinite and unutterable.

I do not wonder that the Jew should fear to write it, and substitute for it the word Adonai, or Lord. We, casting away the superstition, feel an equal reverence, and when our God saith to us "I am Jehovah," we bow before him, and confess that all questioning of possibility is ended for ever.

Yet in the text please to notice that the argument is also founded on *the Lord's relation to man.* "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh." There is no other God for man anywhere or at any time save Jehovah. The gods of the heathen, aha, aha! they deserve no such name: they are idols, but our God made the heavens. There is one living and true God for all flesh; there is, there can be no other; there is no room for another god, for our God filleth all things. He is the God of all flesh, for "it is he that made us, and not we ourselves." We have neither been evolved by law, nor struck out by chance. The wretched *it*, which idiots talk of, is no sire of ours: Jehovah is the Maker of all flesh.

> "His sovereign power, without our aid,
> Made us of clay and formed us men."

We rejoice that all flesh have such a God. Yet note that before the Lord men are only "flesh." Hear this, ye kings and great ones of the earth! He calls you "flesh." How sorrowfully do we see the truth of this in the heartrending sickness of one of the greatest and best beloved of potentates! How wretchedly do we see it amidst the pomp of the funeral when the greatest of the great are carried out to be laid in the pasture-ground of the worm! Hear this, ye men of light and leading! Ye who have bedecked your names with all the letters of the alphabet! You, too, with all your learning, are but flesh. Do I hear you say of such a one: He is a great man? Is "great" a word which can be linked with flesh? What is the grandeur, the glory, the pomp of flesh? All flesh is grass, and grass is cut down, and withereth. Right surely is he accursed that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm. You tell me of the charms of beauty. You sing of your beloveds so white and ruddy; think what they will come to by-and-by. Flesh! Ah me! Leave it to itself. Is there anything fouler or more putrid than flesh when God calls back the spirit which quickeneth it? Behold the harvest of flesh in the garner of the sepulchre! See how the great reaper heaps up corruption! This is what we are, men and brethren. God sees us in our true condition, and he calls us "flesh." Yet I do rejoice that, while we are flesh, he is our God. How is the worm linked to the immortal! Happy men who have such a God! Not that flesh and blood, as they are, can inherit the kingdom of God, nor that corruption can dwell with incorruption; but for believers in the Lord Jesus there is a resurrection which shall lift us into a body of a nobler sort. We shall soon be rid of this carrion, and we shall be aloft with him where he dwelleth; and then, in the day of his appearing, even this poor body shall put on glory, and in our flesh shall we see God. As the Lord maketh the dull gold of earth into clear gold, like unto transparent glass, even so he maketh this vile body to be like the glorious body of our risen and ascended Lord. We bow before the Lord, even we who are but

dust and ashes, yea, worse, who are but flesh, and we bless his name, that yet he deigns to call us his people, and to be our God. The argument is that, since Jehovah is the God of all flesh, he can effect his purposes by men, and work among them things which seem impossible.

The argument is so great that *it puts all other arguments out of court.* Poor Jeremiah is puzzled: he has been buying that acre or two of land which he will never see, and his pockets are empty; and Baruch has been putting away the title-deeds in an earthen vessel, with a half-smile upon his face. The prophet sits down and thinks over the transaction, and his reason or the devil whispers, "What a fool you are! You might just as well have bought a horn of the new moon." Yet, somehow it must be made to appear a wise and sensible transaction, for the Lord never makes fools of his people. Jeremiah feels that, as the command came from Jehovah, his own judgment is out of court: it is for the Lord, and not for him, to make good the transaction. All Jerusalem was to be burned and destroyed; what could be the use of his purchase? But, then, the condition of Jerusalem was not the point to be considered. God had said, "I am Jehovah," and that had put the King of Judah and his mighty men out of the reckoning. Is anything too hard for Jehovah? Come, Jeremiah, rake up your difficulties; set in order the discouraging circumstances; call in your friends, who all shake their heads at you, and point their fingers to their brows, as much as to insinuate that you are a little gone from your senses; and then, answer them all with this "nothing is too hard for Jehovah." This clears the deck of every doubt that would board your vessel. Blessed argument which answers every difficulty, and sets faith upon a rock from which it cannot be removed! "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."

III. Having led you thus far I now would have you follow me in something practical, namely, APPLYING IT IN DETAIL.

The text saith, "Is anything too hard for me?" Apply this question to *the justification of your obedience.* When you know what is right it will happen, more often than not, that to do right will be costly or at least risky; and if you judge after the manner of worldly-wise men you will consider yourselves likely to be losers by obeying God. You may lose friends, reputation, assistance, and peace. This question of loss is answered at once by this fact, that if you do what God bids you, the responsibility of your conduct lies with him, and he will bear you through. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" As he justified the action of his servant Elijah at Carmel, and justified the purchase made by Jeremiah, so will he justify all the obedient actions of his people. He will bring forth our judgment as the light, and our righteousness as the noonday.

Apply this glorious truth to *the sure fulfilment of all the divine promises.* Consider a great one to begin with. This chapter evidently shows that the Jews are one day to be converted and restored. Do you believe it? "Oh," says one, "that would be a wonder"! It will be a wonder, and the text may be read, "Is anything too wonderful for me?" He can call them off from money-hunting: can take away their unbelief concerning the Lord Jesus. He can cause the lips which

now revile the name of the Crucified to sing praises to the Nazarene. Glory be to his name, he can cause the waters of Siloah, which flow softly, again to flow with blessing, and make the desolate land again to blossom as the rose. They that crucified the Lord of glory shall look on him whom they pierced, and shall mourn for him. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

Apply this to *any case of great sin.* Select anyone whom you know to be especially hard-hearted, and pray for him earnestly and hopefully. Choose out some glaring sinner, or special heretic, or fierce hater of religion, and pray for him. You say to yourself, "I will choose an easier case." Do not so. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Will you, in your judgment, set anyone beyond the reach of mercy, and out of the bounds of grace? Make an application of our text to the most desperate and loathsome sinner, and believe that nothing is too hard for the Lord. O chief of sinners, if thou art here this morning, blasphemer, swearer, thief, drunkard, whoremonger, harlot, take home this question to thyself—Thus saith the Lord, "Is anything too hard for me?" If you believe in the Lord Jesus, God has saved you, saved you now. He can and will wash every believing sinner from all his sins through the blood of Jesus, and he will graciously blot out all his iniquities. Remember how he forgave David, and Manasseh, and the dying thief, and Saul of Tarsus, and the woman that was a sinner. May the Holy Ghost make a personal application of omnipotent love to each of you who now feel your sins! Salvation is not too hard a thing for the Lord.

Apply this to *difficult truths.* I will put before you a problem. There is the truth of man's free agency. It is an easy cut, you know, to deny that there is such a thing as free-will; but it is not fair, for men are responsible, free agents, and God has endowed them with will. But the knotty question arises—If man acts freely in his sinful actions how can predestination be a fact? If every man acts after his own will, how, then, does God fore-ordain all things? I answer, "Is anything too hard for Jehovah?" The solving of this great problem constrains me to worship the Lord; for he does solve it in actual history. I could understand God's executing his purposes upon material substances, such as stones and wood; but this is the grandeur of his power, that while he leaves men free agents, and does not in any case lead them to sin, yet they do act exactly as he foretold that they would do. The responsibility lies with them, for they do as they please; but yet his divine purpose is effected. Peter said to the Jews concerning our Lord, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." They did their evil deed most willingly, and yet it was in the divine purpose from of old. They were eager to destroy Christ out of diabolical malice, and yet all the while they were the instruments of the death by which we are redeemed from destruction. Have faith enough to believe that Jehovah rules in the world of mind as well as in that of matter. He doeth as he wills among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world.

Consider another hard case—the hardest of all: *human salvation.* Sin must bring with it punishment. It is an inevitable law of moral

government that, if you break the commandment, the command will be avenged upon you. Yet God is merciful, and he is willing to forgive sin. How can it be possible for God to exercise the fulness of his mercy, and yet discharge the necessities of his justice? All men and all angels put together would have made but one fool in trying to solve that difficulty. The Lord has answered it. He gave his Son to bear our sin. Jehovah Jesus died, and presented himself as the great sacrifice for our iniquities. On yonder cross the law is honoured, and man is justly saved. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

Bring hither *your own little problems*. You are always getting into tangles and snarls. Prudent friends try to help you, but the tangle grows worse. Bring your hard cases to one who is wiser than Solomon, and he will draw out a clear thread for you. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" After Calvary nothing is intricate or difficult. The atoning sacrifice is such a triumph of wisdom and grace as can never be paralleled. Love here wore the girdle of omnipotence. All things are possible since Jesus has died.

We believe in the deep depravity of humanity, but Jehovah can change its nature. The Lord of love can make sinners into saints. We tremble lest some have lost the very capacity for virtue. We ask in despair, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" But with God such marvels are everyday things.

For the salvation of great multitudes we are also exercised. We look on wicked London, and despair of it. We look on China, and India, and Africa, and say, "Can these dry bones live." "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" The tears are in our eyes as we think of the Congo, and the heroic ones who have perished by its pestilential waters. Will Africa ever stretch out its hands unto Christ? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

We look upon the church at home in the present day. It is steeped in worldliness, and smothered with false doctrine. Lo! the many have turned aside from the gospel, and given themselves up to a thousand errors: how can the evil be cured? It is to be cured; it must be cured; it shall be cured, for thus saith Jehovah—"Is anything too hard for me?" If the Lord had left but one faithful man under heaven he would with that one man deliver Israel. But he has reserved for himself thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Let us have no fear about it, but let us exhibit a boundless confidence. God's truth will win the day who ever comes against it. "Is anything too hard for Jehovah?" I have lived to see, and shall yet live to see, such marvels in this respect as fill my mouth with laughter and my tongue with singing; "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." If the Lord waiteth a little it is that he may gain the

more glory. If he even seemeth to draw back doth not many a man draw back when he is about to take the longer leap? Have you never seen a man draw back his hand when he is about to strike a tremendous blow? God is never baffled; Jesus shall not fail, nor be discouraged. The living Christ hath died in weakness once; but now that he liveth he lives in all the power and majesty of the living God. To what may we not apply the text, when Jehovah asks us, "Is anything too hard for me"?

IV. Lastly, dear friends, I beg you to treat the text as USING IT WITH DELIGHT. Time allows but few words. Use the text as a *preventive of unbelieving sin.* You say you are in a nasty hobble. I know you are; and, therefore, the devil says, "Put forth your hand unto iniquity." An evil transaction seems the sure way to get you out of your difficulty. What! do you wish to help the Lord? Do you dream that he needs your sin to aid him in delivering you? Flee from the rash action. Let not your hand reproach you, as Cranmer's did when at the stake: he held it in the fire, and cried, "That unworthy right hand," because it had once signed a recantation. Do not sin. Be poor, but be holy. Be straightforward and honest, come what may. God does not need the help of your sin in order that he may give you your daily bread. When I think of a man supposing that sin is necessary to help God's providence, I am ashamed. Even in what is right our aid to God is like an emmet lending help to an elephant; but to do wrong to help the Lord to provide for us is a sort of acted blasphemy. And such a poor creature as you are, do you think that your foul finger is needful to God's divine work? Away with the idea of its ever being needful to do wrong. Let all sins of haste, all tricks of policy, all compromises with error, all silence through the fear of consequences, all doings or not doings which would involve a blot on your conscience, be put away for ever. That filthy thing—temporizing and parleying with evil, which men call prudence—let it be hanged upon the gallows of scorn. Do God's work thoroughly, heartily, intensely, and God will reward you in his grace.

Use it next for *consolation in the time of trouble.* You are now in a pit wherein there is no water: how can you ever get out? Listen: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" It is worse than a pit, say you: it seems like a living hell. The Lord can deliver you. Remember Jonah in the belly of the great fish, which went down deeper and deeper till it seemed to dive below the bottoms of the mountains. It seemed all over with Jonah. But it was not so. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Jonah owned that "salvation is of the Lord," and the fish was not able to imprison him any longer. Forth came Jonah to life and liberty. Jehovah hath delivered those who trust in him, and he will yet deliver us.

Next, use the text as a window through which you look with *expectation*. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Expect the unexpected to happen to you. He who whispers to himself—"God is going to do something for me that I have never looked for" is the brave man. "A storm is brewing," cries one. Is it? My way of putting it is—rain is being prepared for the earth. Brethren, the Lord's blessing is coming upon the churches: look for it!

Let this text be a stimulus to you to engage in great enterprises. Launch out into the deep. Do not always keep on fishing for shrimps along the shore. Attempt great things for God. Attempt something which as yet you cannot do. Any fool can do what he can do; it is only the believer who does what he cannot do. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Fall back upon omnipotence, and then go forward in the strength of it.

Let the text be a reason for *adoration*. O thou to whom nothing is hard, we adore thee! We worship thee with all our hearts, and this day we believingly link our weakness with thine omnipotence. We trust thee for life, for death, for eternity. Dear Saviour, we trust thee now with all our sins and sorrows. Nothing is too hard for thee, therefore save thy poor servants according to the riches of thy grace.

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah xxxii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—187, 211, 209.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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NATHANAEL; OR, THE READY BELIEVER AND HIS REWARD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these."—John i. 50.

NATHANAEL was by nature a man free from cunning and deceit. He was a specimen of that "honest and good ground" of which our Saviour speaks in the parable, upon which, when the seed fell, a hundredfold harvest was produced. We have some such men about us, thank God, in this country: regular John Blunts, as we say, clear as crystal, true as the sun in the heavens. Many men are well known to us, who are upright, downright, truthful, honest, candid, and open-hearted. You might trust them anywhere; yea, trust them to repeat a conversation without misrepresenting it, and that is saying a good deal in these times. Such people do not understand the clever arts of craft and cunning, for they do not take to them naturally, and have never been trained in the practice of policy. Speech is not to them the medium for concealing their thoughts. When they have a mind to speak, they speak their mind. You know where they are. They may have a great many faults, but they have not the faults of deception and dissimulation. They are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile. You know the kind of people: they may at times speak too harshly, and hurt your feelings; they may put things in an ugly shape, and tread on people's corns; but they are as straight as a plumb-line, and you may be sure that you know them when you have heard what they say. In the end they cause far less pain to people's feelings than those who have a great deal of finesse and policy, whose words are softer than butter, but inwardly they are drawn swords. Smooth and oily tongues, with lying hearts at the back of them, are fit instruments for Satan; but truth-speaking lips, which are joined to an honest heart, are precious things which the Lord himself delights to use.

Now, when the good brethren who had joined the Saviour came to tell Nathanael that they had found the Christ, he blurted out his objection at once. They said, "We have found him, of whom Moses

in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth"; but he did not take everything for gospel which his friends told him. Nathanael had been born and bred in the midst of people prejudiced against Nazareth, and he had sucked in their prejudice, and felt sure that the Messiah could no more come from Nazareth than a profound philosopher could come from Gotham. He does not beat about the bush, but he says at once, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" It is always a good thing, when a man has a prejudice, if he will but state it, and "out" with it. You can always deal with this kind of fellow. If he will say what is troubling him, and tell you what keeps him back from faith, why, then you can put your finger on his difficulty, and try to remove it. It is a great miracle when a dumb devil is cast out; if the evil will but speak, and so declare itself, we have a chance of overcoming it.

Nathanael's question was met at once by his comrades, who said to him, "Come and see"; and, like the honest man that he was, he took up their challenge. He would "come and see." How many there are who make objections, but they will not "come and see"! They have heard concerning a certain preacher, perhaps, such and such absurd things; but another says, "It is not so. Come and see." Not they. They do not want to come and see: for they are unfair, and prefer to cherish a bad opinion of the man. They have heard that Calvinistic doctrine is cruel, harsh, and unjust. "Ah!" says a believer in free grace, "you have only seen a caricature of it. You should read for yourself, and judge by Scripture." Oh, no: they do not want to read! They have made up their minds: not that they have much of a mind to make up; if they had more mind, it might take them longer to make it up. But, having once made up their little mind, they have no mind to unmake it; but they prefer to go blindly on, whether they are right or wrong. They know so much that they do not wish to learn any more. Nathanael was not of that sort. "Come and see," was an invitation which commended itself to his judgment. "Oh, yes," said he, "by all means! I am open to conviction. I will come and see." I wish I could prevail on each one of my hearers to search the Bible for himself to see what the true doctrine is, that he may have a firm foundation to build upon, and not take his religion at second-hand from another.

Nathanael is on his way to see for himself, when the Lord Jesus Christ, turning to those round about him, says, in a voice loud enough for him to hear, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Here comes a man with no craft, no cunning in him. Nathanael is startled to find his real character so clearly read, and somewhat bluntly asks, "Whence knowest thou me?" I must do him the justice of believing that he said it respectfully, yet, nevertheless, he curtly said, "Whence knowest thou me?" As much as to say—"Thou hast hit the nail on the head; but how camest thou to know this?" You see, the enquiry that was in his mind is soon upon his tongue; his words at once declare his thought. It is a great mercy when men dare speak upon that which troubles them. Instead of letting a doubt or a difficulty fester in their souls, they bring it out, that the light may play upon it, and it is soon gone.

"Jesus answered, and said to him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." What Nathanael was doing under the fig tree I do not know. Some think that he was there in meditation; others say in prayer. Very possibly, but I do not know, and the wisest expositors do not know, and you do not know. Nobody knew but Jesus and Nathanael. He was doing something of which he was not ashamed, but which he modestly did not wish to have known, and so he had chosen a private place. That transaction was a secret between himself and the Lord his God, and he who knew that secret must have come from God. Perhaps he was doing nothing there, but sitting still before the Lord in anguish of spirit. Possibly he there had looked towards the God of his fathers with hope, or had enjoyed hallowed fellowship with heaven. Anyhow, Jesus mentioned to him a something which he remembered, and thought much of, though it was entirely between God and his own soul. Between Jesus and Nathanael, "under the fig tree" served as a pass-word. They were known to one another by that; and at once Nathanael cried, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." He is fairly won, and by an open confession he commits himself at once to what he believes. He is not ashamed of his convictions. He has enlisted beneath the banner of the King of Israel once for all. Forth he comes without a moment's reservation with that blessed confession of faith—"Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Our Lord Jesus, charmed with the grace which he had himself given, delighted with the faith which he had himself created, answers, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these." This ready convert, so speedily convinced, was very acceptable to the Lord Jesus.

Now, we have to-night here, first, *one who believed readily.* I am going to speak of that. Secondly, here is *one who was highly commended for it:* "Thou shalt see greater things than these." Thirdly, here is *one who might possibly in after days be subject to a peculiar temptation on account of his very readiness to believe.* And, lastly, here is *one who, I doubt not, was peculiarly grateful;* and if there is another here like him, he ought to be very grateful too.

I. First, then, HERE IS ONE WHO BELIEVED READILY. The first time he saw the Saviour he was converted to the faith. The first sentences that were addressed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ fairly won him to hearty faith and loyal service. Why was that? Why was he so soon brought to discipleship?

I think, perhaps, it was because *he was such a true man himself that the element of suspicion was not in his character.* Persons who are remarkably suspicious and constantly incredulous, are seldom very truthful themselves. If you follow them home, you will discover that they are suspicious of others because they are not true themselves, and their difficulty in believing others arises from the fact that they measure other people's corn with their own bushel. They imagine that other people are as big liars as they are themselves. I believe that this is the bottom of much of the mistrust and questioning which seethes around us. Sometimes that suspiciousness comes upon men's minds through long dealing with deceptive persons. But if you find

that a man began life with a general suspicion and doubt of others, you may conclude that he was a born deceiver, radically false from his birth. He judges human nature from his experience within his own heart. He has observed his own trickiness, and he thinks that everybody else is going to trick him; and so he is full of suspicion. Nathanael had never taken anybody in nor tried to mislead anyone in his life, and therefore he did not expect to be deceived. I wonder whether he was a sailor. I should think that he must have been, for sailors are generally as open as the sea they sail over. He never said anything with reserve. Not he. He was accustomed to wear his heart on his sleeve, even if daws did peck at it. He could not conceal anything, nor think that others did so. He was just as honest as the day; and so he came to the Saviour with a heart that was open to faith, ready to believe him. I should think the very sight of the Saviour's blessed face had half won him, and the tone of that truthful voice had moved him; but when it came to his laying bare a secret in his life which he was sure that nobody knew but himself and God, then Nathanael yielded to conviction at once, and became a believer straightway.

Now, I do hope that there are some here to whom the Lord has given, from their very birth, a truthful, open-hearted nature: now if you should believe in Jesus Christ to-night straightway, even though it be the first time you have ever heard of him, I shall bless the grace of God which has led you to so speedy a closing in with Christ. Oh that the Holy Ghost may complete the work of which there is already so hopeful a beginning!

But, further, this Nathanael, this rapid believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, had, I have no doubt, *been seeking guidance beforehand, and that guidance he had honestly followed.* I should think that he had for years been expecting the coming of the Messiah. The tone of his language argues that. Therefore, when Philip came to him, and told him that he had found the Messiah, and indicated to him that he had better come and see for himself, he was willing at once to come, and without delay he came with the view of seeing for himself whether this Jesus of Nazareth was the promised one. He was not only candid, but he was interested. He was concerned about divine things, and in thorough earnest to know the truth in reference to them. So that he came to Jesus with solemn intent and eager desire. O dear friends, if you came to hear the gospel, meaning business, we should expect to see more of you converted. But people come into our great assemblies to see the congregation, or to inspect the building, or to hear the preacher; their motive is mere idle curiosity. Well, if they get a blessing, we shall heartily thank God for it, and admire the sovereignty of his grace; but when persons come, as they often do, I thank God, even from a great distance, with the desire to know what the gospel is, and with a wish to find the Saviour for themselves, then we have surer hope. These enquirers are the people that are likely to be converted. When fish want to be caught, it is good fishing. When they are anxious to take the bait, then the fisherman has fine times. If, my dear hearers, you would come here saying, "I will go and see whether I can find salvation; I will hear with the intention that the

hearing may be a means of grace to my soul," none of you would come long in vain where Christ Jesus is faithfully preached. If you come with a desire of understanding and knowing him, he will come and reveal himself to you. This was one main reason why Nathanael so speedily believed—that he came meaning business, having sought guidance, and desiring really to find the Messiah of whom Philip had spoken.

Observe that *he was satisfied with one piece of clear evidence.* That one item of evidence convinced him. The Lord Jesus said, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Nobody knew that he had been under the fig tree except the Lord who sees all things. No mortal living was aware of what Nathanael had done, or thought, or purposed in that shady retreat. When Jesus, therefore, with a peculiar look, said "I saw thee," Nathanael also saw him that spake to him. "Godhead alone could speak thus," said he: "there is the Spirit of God in that man. He knows the secret things of my life. He has revealed me to myself." "Rabbi," said he, "thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." The conclusion was a sound one, but how speedily it was reached!

One argument, if it is sound, is enough. If a matter is in dispute, and if one man can solemnly declare that he saw such and such a thing, and that one man is of high repute, his evidence is sufficient for a truthful man to rest upon. Twenty may come and say that they think it is so-and-so, but twenty weak links will not make a strong chain; and I would rather trust to one solid link than I would trust to a chain of twenty worn and rusted links, each one of which is ready to snap. If it is so, it is so. If it is not so, it is not so. If a man has proved anything to me by one infallible proof, that is enough. Hence, I believe that those who come to Christ on one bit of evidence are justified in so doing. They afterwards receive a host of confirming evidences, but one is quite enough for them to begin with. Oh, that I might have some to-night who shall hear in this sermon some one thing which shall strike them as being of the Lord! I pray that some secret matter, which I do not personally know, shall yet be uttered by me, so that my hearers will say to themselves, "How came that to be spoken? That fits me exactly, yet the minister could not have known it. God must have spoken to me. Only the Lord knew what I did in the back kitchen. Only he knew what I was thinking of this afternoon; but, speaking through his servant, he has touched a secret spring and opened a drawer in my cabinet that nobody knew of save myself! This is the finger of God." God grant that some may thus be led to Jesus Christ by one piece of evidence, and may not tarry to feel fifty impressions on their hearts. Oh, that you would not wait for whole weeks of invitations, and months of pressure, and years of expostulation; but oh, that you would yield to-night! Sometimes, in warfare, cities have been taken without a shot being fired. The valiant men have come up to the gates, and they have said, "Capitulate, and you shall be spared"; and the townsmen have opened wide their gates. I know that many other cities have had to be battered till there has been scarcely a house without tokens of shot and shell; but what has been their gain when they have been captured after all? Do not let it be so with your souls,

but yield at once to the conquering Saviour, who comes forth in the robes of his glorious grace, and bids you yield; and promises that, if you accept his sceptre, you shall see the greatness of his grace.

Notice, however, that although Nathanael yielded at once and believed on one bit of evidence, *yet his faith went a long way!* He did not merely say, "Rabbi, I believe that thou art the Messiah," but he said, "Thou art the Son of God." This was farther than anybody else had gone at that time, so far as I remember. He added, "Thou art the King of Israel"; and this again was a great declaration to make. He worshipped Jesus, and he crowned him. He owned him as God, and he magnified him as King. Do not suppose that the faith which is quickly born is therefore weakly. Nay, but that faith which comes suddenly and quickly is often the very best and strongest faith in all the world; and I trust that some of you may prove it to be so to-night by flying to Christ at once, as the doves fly to their windows, and resting in him till you find fulness of peace.

Thus much concerning the Israelite indeed who believed readily.

II. In the second place, HERE IS ONE WHO WAS HIGHLY COMMENDED. *The Lord Jesus owned his faith to be true faith.* He said, "Believest thou?" but he meant that he perceived that he truly believed. He owned that, though his faith was born then and there, it was the genuine article. Christ owns, as true faith, that faith which is not long in coming. Fear not, dear hearer, that if thou believest off-hand at this very moment thy faith will be any the less sincere and effectual.

Jesus did more than own it to be faith. *He commended it as rarely excellent.* He spoke as if he were astonished. "Because I said, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?"—as much as to say, "Many see me work miracles, and do not believe; dost thou believe so soon? They see me heal lepers, and raise the dead, and yet they will not believe; but thou believest merely because I said, I saw thee under the fig tree." He is charmed with him for his readiness to own the truth. Why, there are some young people who come to Christ and believe in him by some one little word from their mother; and on the other hand, there are men and women who have been for fifty years hearers of the gospel, and yet have not believed. Now, the Christ has an admiration of those who readily, willingly, obediently, and cheerfully come, making no questions, raising no difficulties, but on comparatively slender evidence, that evidence being quite sufficient, yield their full trust to Jesus Christ their Lord.

And our blessed Lord was so pleased with this ready faith, that *he made a promise to Nathanael.* Said he, "Thou shalt see greater things than these. If thou canst see so much in my one saying, that I saw thee under the fig tree, thou hast the kind of eyes that are fit to see great sights." He that will see shall see, but he that closes his eyes shall be blinded. Many are the people in this world who, if you show them the greatest marvel, do not wonder. They look at it, and see nothing. When you meet with such an unobservant person, you say to yourself, "I shall not show that man anything more. It does not pay to unveil rarities to him, he has no appreciation of them." But here is another who, when you show him some curio that you have in your

house, is pleased with it, and spies out at once the excellence and beauty of it. You say, "I have something more which I will gladly show you!" When your visitor appreciates your choice treasure, you say to him, "I will unlock all my cabinets. I will take you into my private room, and every little thing I have that can interest you, you shall see, because I perceive that you have eyes, and a mind which finds gratification in rare curiosities." Oh, you that readily believe in Christ, you are the men to whom Christ will make known his secrets! Those of you who are "fools, and slow of heart to believe" must mend your manners, or the Holy Spirit will never lead you into the mysteries of the kingdom. Did not Jesus say to one who came to him by night, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" But, you Israelites indeed, you quick believers, to you will he reveal himself as the ladder that father Jacob saw, reaching from earth to heaven, upon which the angels ascend and descend between God and his chosen. You shall see the deep things of God. You are the people out of whom he will make such men as John, who, in Patmos, beheld a glorious Apocalypse. O my beloved hearers, may it be so with you! Because your faith so readily chimes in with what Christ reveals, may you have visions of God, and may none of you be so dull of heart that it shall be said, "He could not show them many mighty works because of their unbelief"!

III. I have thus spoken, and I come, thirdly, to notice that HERE IS A MAN WHO MIGHT POSSIBLY BE TROUBLED WITH A PECULIAR TEMPTATION. People of this kind are subject to a special trial, with which I will now deal.

In this church a considerable number of us, beginning with the pastor, came to Christ after an awful amount of conviction and despondency. We are none the better for this, but we are at least free from one particular temptation of the evil one. Oh, how I look back upon those times in which I felt my bondage, but could not attain to liberty—those days in which Christ was preached to me, but I could not hear him, and I wandered up and down everywhere before I found peace! In this church, and in the officers of the church among the deacons, there is especially one dear brother who sometimes can hardly understand me when I speak about the difficulties some have in coming to Christ, for he never experienced them. You all know him, one of the sweetest and best of men; but he came to Jesus Christ as a boy readily enough. He heard the gospel, and he believed it, and without any sort of terror he rejoiced in the Lord, and he continues to do so to this day. He is none the worse saint for this, but in some respects all the better. I know, however, what is the peculiar temptation of those who come so readily to Christ. The devil comes to them, and he says, "Now, look you. You have read Mr. Bunyan's 'Grace Abounding,' have you not?" "Yes," says the good man. "Well," says he, "you never went through the like battle and struggle." "No, I never did." "Then," says he, "You are no child of God. You see, you were easily converted: there was no deep work in your soul. You came to Jesus Christ one sunshiny day, and you will go away from him one dark day. You are like the

stony-ground hearer, the seed sprang up in you on a sudden, because there was no depth of earth, and you will soon die away when the sun is risen with fervent heat." Now, the next time the devil comes to any of you with that, I want you to talk to him, if he is worth it, for your own good. I want you to quench the fiery dart which he will fling at you. It is true that many come to the Lord Jesus under extreme difficulties, and are long before they can rest in faith; but you must not compare yourself with others, nor expect that the work of God will take precisely the same shape in every heart. Some, like Nicodemus, say, "How can these things be?" but others believe in Jesus as readily as Nathanael did, and they come just as truly, just as really, just as lastingly as those who find it difficult to come.

Let me help you with a few considerations. Those you have read of, who came to Christ under so much terror, *it may be that they had some other trouble at the same time*, as well as the trouble of their conscience. Perhaps, in addition to being convinced of sin, they were suffering from poverty, or sickness, or dyspepsia, or remorse, or some other vexation of spirit. Discern carefully between spiritual trouble and temporal trouble. Temporal trouble may help to aggravate the spiritual, but it is not a necessary part of it, but very much the reverse. It may increase the apparent depth of the work of repentance, but it may detract from its real worth.

In the next place, it may be, and probably is the fact, that those who found so much difficulty in coming to Christ *were worried by Satan.* Perhaps he injected into their minds blasphemous thoughts, or he suggested doubts concerning the Scriptures, or the truth of God. Because they were just escaping from his power he worried them most maliciously. Do you want to be worried in that way? Do you think that there is any advantage in Satan's attacks? If you can get to Christ without them, ought you not to be thankful to escape them? How can you desire an affliction so utterly undesirable? How can you wish to feel that which those who suffer from it would give their eyes to be rid of? I beseech you, do be reasonable.

In many persons their difficulties in coming to Christ were *caused very largely by their melancholy temperament.* We are not all alike cheerful by natural constitution. Why, here is one man who is bright-eyed by nature, and when he is down he is higher up than others are when they are up. He is always bright and hopeful. Yonder is another brother who seems inevitably to take a dark view of matters. He is an unhappily constituted person; a person with whom it is not easy to live except in a very large hotel, in which the dinner-table is many yards long. You know and avoid the style of man. If there is a melancholy disposition, it tends to darken the work of the Spirit in the heart; and whereas the work of the Spirit makes the man sorrowful, his own melancholy disposition, perhaps caused by mental disease, darkens that sorrow into black despair. Few of us are perfectly sane. In fact, I do not think anybody is altogether so. I see you smile, but I am not jesting: we have each one a peculiarity, which we could hardly defend by the rules of strict reasoning. Have we not? We are all a little "touched" by that black hand which sin stretched out when it shook our universal manhood in all its faculties. Some are

touched with melancholy from their birth, and so a part of their great terror when under conviction may arise from the fact that they are not absolutely free to form a hopeful judgment. Why should you wish to be like them? What can there be desirable about feelings which spring from a disease?

Again, there is no doubt that many in coming to Christ are *greatly troubled because they are ignorant.* They do not know that which would comfort them if they did but know it. They are vexed with fears which would not exist if they were better acquainted with Scripture. If they knew more of the doctrines of grace they would not be vexed with the fears which their ignorance creates. You who are taught in the Word are all the more likely to find speedy peace. Now, dear friends, do you want to be bothered with fears which only spring out of ignorance? Must it not be much better for you, having a clearer light and a brighter knowledge, to say, "Yes, that is it. I believe in Jesus Christ, and I am saved. Blessed be his name! I ask no questions. I believe, and am saved at once"?

May it not also be that those who are so hard put to it in coming to Christ *are without the helps that you have?* Perhaps they cannot read. Possibly they have nobody to explain the Scriptures to them. They may be misled by their religious guides, and have no one to keep them out of the ditch. It may be that they are placed where they are rather hindered than helped; they have no Sunday-school teacher, no Christian friend to sympathize with them; and so they have a hard fight of it. Many a man who is wounded in battle is soon restored, because the surgeon takes him up as soon as the bullet lays him low; whereas the wound of another, who has to lie and bleed for hours, will prove far more serious. Do you not think that you ought to be very thankful that you have so many things to help you, and that thus you the more readily come to Christ?

Very possibly, too, many of those who had those terrors and horrors in coming to Christ, as I had myself, *must lay them to the door of their unbelief.* Had they believed, they might have had comfort long before; but they went to the law for comfort, or they looked to feelings instead of looking to Christ, and so they remained in darkness. Now, if you have the privilege of believing at once, as I pray you may have, should you not be glad of it, and, instead of envying those others, should you not thank God that you were brought to find Jesus Christ by so sunny and speedy a route?

There is a story that I have told you before, but I must tell it to you again, for I do not know anything better. A young man in Edinburgh went out, and he thought he would speak about Jesus to the first person that he met with. He met a Musselburgh fishwife carrying a great load on her back. I cannot speak Scotch: I have not that useful acquirement; so I will put the conversation into English. He said to her, "Here you are with your burden." "Ay," said she. "Well," he said, "did you ever feel a spiritual burden?" "Ay," said she, "that I did, long ago, long ago, and I soon got rid of it; for I did not go the same way to work that John Bunyan's pilgrim did." "Oh," thought the young man, "I hoped that I had met with a Christian woman, but she must be a great heretic to talk in that way."

"Now," said she, "Bunyan's Evangelist that he speaks of was not half a gospel preacher. He was one of the usual sort. He was not clear in the gospel; for when he met with the poor pilgrim, weary with his burden, he said to him, 'Do you see that wicket-gate?' 'No,' said the man, 'I do not see it.' 'Do you see that light over the gate?' 'Well,' he said, 'I think I do.' 'Now,' he said, 'you run that way with your burden.' Why man," said she, "that was not the way to do at all. What had that man to do with the wicket-gate or with the light over it? The gospel does not say run to a gate or a light. What he should have said was, 'Do you see that cross? Look at that, and your burden will fall from your shoulder.' I looked straight away to the cross, and not to the wicket-gate; and at the cross I lost my burden. Now," said she, "what did pilgrim get by going round to the wicket-gate? He tumbled into the Slough of Despond, and was like to have lost his life there." "Ah!" said the young man, "did you never go through the Slough of Despond?" "Ah, yes!" she said, "I have been through that slough many a time; but, let me tell you, it is much better to go through it with your burden off than it is with your burden on." And so it is. I do not want any of you to attempt to flounder through the Slough of Despond with your burden on. I want you to have done with the Slough of Despond, and the wicket-gate, and all that bother, and just look to Christ alone; for salvation lies in a look at him, and there is salvation in none other. Peace comes to sinners by nothing else but faith in Jesus. All else is vain, be it what it may. Frames and feelings, sinkings and risings, doings and frettings—all these may go for nothing. Believe in Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. This is God's short way to heaven, and blessed is he who knows how to take it.

Listen yet once more. Thou sayest, "But I have heard of some who endured a dreadful law work within their souls. They were ploughed and cut up dreadfully, and I never was." I will further tell thee that certain persons need rougher handling than others. The needle in surgery will do for certain cases, whereas the lancet is wanted for others. If the Lord can with a needle do for thee all that is needed, why dost thou ask more? The Lord required to take the knife to me, and art thou going to fret because thou hast never felt the deep gashes which made me cry out in agony? I pray thee, be not such a fool: I cannot speak a softer word if thou hast a craving after anguish.

Again, the Lord may deal roughly with some because *he means to qualify them for comforting despairing souls.* He puts his servants through the furnace when he means them to work at pulling others out of the fire. He chastens them every morning because he means to make Barnabases of them, that they may be sons of consolation to souls in distress. I have been through the thick darkness at times for your sakes. If ever a soul was in a horror of great darkness, I was one day when I preached in this pulpit from "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I could not understand why I felt in such an awful state as I did, till that evening there came into the vestry a man whose hair seemed to stand on end. He looked at me, and said, "I have never found a preacher that met my experience before."

We sat down, and he told out his tale of woe. I rescued that man, by seasonable comfort, from being sent to a lunatic asylum, and perhaps from committing suicide; and then I said to the Lord my God, "Let me go through the fire again if it will help me to meet the case of thy poor afflicted children. Let me feel the horror of great darkness, if so I may thereby find light with which to cheer the victims of despair." But you, my dear brother, my dear sister, may not be called thus to cut your way through the forests of sorrow as the pioneer of others. You are not sent to be a guide to thousands, but quietly to pursue your own lowly way; and why do you want all this painful experience? You cannot make use of it; be thankful that you are spared the ordeal. Those who have to be champions must be trained for war after a sterner sort than those who only make up the rank and file of the army. If thy Lord means to lead thee only as sheep at his heel into the green pastures, by the still waters, thou wilt see but little of the war, and little of the rough side of the march; and why shouldst thou be so stupid as to desire distress, and condemn thyself because thou hast it not? Be a Nathanael. Take the happier and better side, and believe thou thy God without a doubt or a quibble; and go thou to heaven following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, without doubt or fear.

I was going to have another head, but I think that I will not, I will venture no further, but close with a word to sinners, although I have in truth been speaking to them all through my discourse.

Hear me, thou that wouldst be saved. The way of salvation is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, by trusting him. There are two things I have to say to thee. First, God commands thee to believe in Jesus Christ: and, secondly, nothing thou canst do will please God so much as for thee at once to believe in his Only-begotten Son, whom he has set forth to be the propitiation for sin.

These are two strong things to say, and so I will not say them, of myself, but give you God's Word for them. Please note these texts down, all of you. First Epistle General of John, third chapter, at the twenty-third verse:—"And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Let me tell you where it is again. First Epistle of John, third chapter, twenty-third verse:—"This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." If thou art commanded to do it, do it. If thou hast salvation promised thee when thou dost believe on the name of Jesus, why then believe, and have salvation. Believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. That is the first point. God commands thee: wilt thou disobey?

The second thing I said was that nothing thou canst do will please God so much as for thee now to believe in Jesus Christ. Look at the sixth chapter of John's gospel, and the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses. There you have it. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" They meant, "What are the best works, the works most pleasing to God?" "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." If you could build a row of alms-houses, or endow a church, or pay the salaries of a hundred missionaries,

it would not half so well please God as for you to believe on his Son Jesus Christ. Trust Christ, and thou hast worshipped God as acceptably as cherubim and seraphim. Trust Christ, and thou hast brought unto the Lord that which will charm him more than the hallelujahs which, day without night, circle his throne with praise. Thou poor guilty man, thou poor guilty woman, humble, unknown, obscure, a nobody, God bids thee trust his Son, and assures thee that this will please him more than all else thou canst do! Wilt thou not do it? Oh, end your ramblings; end your strivings; end your seekings. Come and trust my Lord Jesus, and thou shalt receive eternal life. Your frettings, and your hopings, and your doubtings, your comings, and your goings—end them all by simply trusting Jesus, and it is finished: thou art saved from wrath, and the life of holiness has begun in thee. Now shalt thou live after a nobler sort. Now shalt thou be filled with good works to the praise of his glory, seeing thou art no more trusting in them. I beseech thee trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and thou shalt receive power to become a child of God.

May the Lord bless you, dear friends! May we all meet in heaven, the whole company of us, without exception, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John i. 35—51.

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"THE WEDDING WAS FURNISHED WITH GUESTS."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 6TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The wedding was furnished with guests."—Matthew xxii. 10.

OUR discourse will follow the lines of the parable. A king desired to honour his son right royally. He loved his son well, for he deserved richly of him; and therefore, as the most fitting time had come, he resolved to honour him. His son was about to take to himself a spouse; should not his marriage, which is a great event in life, be celebrated with honour? The father determined to honour his son on the joyful occasion by inviting a large number of guests to a sumptuous banquet. Not by the infliction of pain, or the pressure of taxation, but by liberality and festivity, would the king honour the Crown Prince. It should be an extraordinary feast. Surely, it would be the simplest thing in the world to gather together a grateful company of guests. One would expect a competition for admission; everybody in the royal domain would eagerly ask for an invitation. But it fell out otherwise; there was a disloyal feeling abroad, and it now expressed itself; those who were bidden would not come, and means had to be used to secure the result spoken of in the text, so that "the wedding was furnished with guests."

The parable is plain. The great Father delights to honour Jesus, his Only-begotten Son. The Father loves the Son, with whom he is one. The Son has deserved well at the Father's hands, for he has been "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It is the Father's aim in the work of grace to glorify his Son, who, as God and man in one nature, is the channel of grace to fallen men. He proposes to do this now that the Lord Jesus takes his church into marriage union with himself. The incarnate God calls a chosen company, the bride, the Lamb's wife, and celebrates thus early in the day this happy union by a wedding breakfast, to which he invites multitudes to come. It is a feast of mercy, grace, and peace; a marriage feast of delight and joy. The feast is for the glorifying of the Lord Jesus Christ in a very special manner. Can any of us measure the glory which comes to our Lord Jesus by his union with the church? Angels, and principalities, and powers, intelligences

now existing, and all intelligences yet to be created, will wonderingly gaze upon the riches of his inheritance in the saints. What a spectacle is this! The Word made flesh that he might dwell among us! Immanuel, God with us, taking unto himself a company of chosen men, to be one with him for ever. In the union of Christ and his church all wisdom centres, all grace shines forth. "The excellency of our God" is to be seen in the salvation of the elect and the joining of them unto the Christ. Our glorious Second Adam was like the first Adam in the garden, for whom no helpmeet was found. Neither cherubim nor seraphim, angels nor spirits, could be fit companions for him. He says, "My delights were with the sons of men." He willed that his chosen church should stand to him in the same relation as Eve stood to Adam, to be the solace of his heart and the rest of his love. He chose men to be his companions, his friends, his joy, his crown.

One would have thought that every man hearing that manhood was thus to be honoured by union with Godhead would flock towards the marriage-feast. It would have seemed certain that all would desire to know this heavenly mystery, and as soon as they knew it would press forward to be partakers in its bliss. Alas! this is not the case; and this morning my business is to tell you the story of how the purpose of divine love appeared in peril, but how, in the end, it is accomplished; and, according to the language of the text, "the wedding was furnished with guests."

I. Our first point is, that IT SEEMED AS IF NONE WOULD COME. The wedding-feast was prepared: oxen and fatlings were killed, all things were ready; but where were the guests?

Those first invited, and naturally expected, would not come. Previous notice had been given them of the festival, and afterwards a summons had been sent to say that the hour was come; but, instead of joyfully responding, they would not come.

These were, first of all, the Jews, to whom the gospel had been given by the law and the prophets long beforehand. "He came unto his own, but his own received him not." Israel was not gathered: few out of the chosen nation recognized the Messiah. He came with a feast of mercy for them, but they would have none of it. He called, and they refused.

To-day this same class will be found among the children of godly parents; dedicated from their birth, prayed for by loving piety, listening to the gospel from their childhood, and yet unsaved. We look for these to come to Jesus. We naturally hope that they will feast upon the provisions of grace, and like their parents will rejoice in Christ Jesus; but, alas! how often it is the case they will not come! Some such are here this morning. We greatly grieve over you. You do not choose your father's God, nor accept your mother's Saviour. Ah me! if *you* will not come, who will? If you, who are taught concerning salvation by grace, yet refuse it, how can we wonder that the children of the godless and the profane reject our message? Who will come if you will not?

Dear hearers, some of you are not privileged with godly parents, but you have been for many years willing listeners to the Word of life,

and yet you do not accept Christ Jesus as yours, nor accept the provisions of his grace. You do not joy with him in his union with his chosen, for you do not love him. How sad is this! Well may the dispirited preacher mourn, and fear in his heart that the great festival of love will prove a failure! If such as you are will not come, how will the wedding be furnished with guests?

The outlook grew worse still when *they came not though they were reasoned with.* When they would not come, the king sent other servants to bring them to a better mind; and this was the form of his reasoning: "Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." No kinder argument could have been used: there was an appeal to all that was noble in them, and had they been worthy they would have come at once. I can well understand that the servants would repeat their lord's message with special eagerness, as they thought of his waiting in the palace, and watching for the guests. They would cry to those who hesitated, "You have waited long enough, come at once. The marriage cannot be delayed, why should *you* delay? Tarry no longer. To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts." Still they made light of it. When you have been invited to Jesus many a time; when tearful earnestness has pleaded with you, and yet men of God have had to return to their Master, saying, "Who hath believed our report?" it becomes a sorrowful business, and our anxious fears cannot see how the wedding will be furnished with guests. This would have been an overwhelming surprise to us if Jesus had not declared of men in his own day, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." If they refused his pleadings we cannot wonder that they reject our sayings. Still it is a mournful fact, that "Many are called, but few chosen."

The case looks darker still when we notice that, *though reasoned with by new messengers, they did not come.* It is said, "He sent forth other servants." I tell you from my very soul that, if my Lord will only bring you to the banquet of his grace, I mind not who shall be the successful messenger. If you will not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life through what I have to say, may the Lord remove me, and send some one else, to whom he will give power by his grace to reach your hearts. I shall be glad to remain in this pulpit for years to come, but not at the cost of a single soul. If somebody else can preach to you more efficiently, if some one else can get at your hearts better than I have done, may the Lord allow me to retire for your good! Do you wish it? "He sent other servants." A preacher may be too rhetorical: let a plain-speaking person be tried. He may be too weighty: let another come with parable and anecdote. Alas! with some of you the thing wanted is not a new voice, but a new heart. You would listen no better to a new messenger than to the old one. After so many good men and true have spoken; after Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas have all failed, how shall the wedding be furnished with guests?

If you look at *the various characters who would not come,* you will see more and more cause for sorrow. Of some we simply read that "*they would not come.*" They made no excuses or apologies, but curtly said

they would not come. There was an end of the matter. Many dismiss the gospel at once; they are not to be reasoned with: they do not want it, and will not have it. A large class of the community have heard of the way of salvation, but they care nothing for it. It is not with them want of information, but want of inclination. They have neither mind nor will for heavenly things.

A second class made light of it. They were indifferent to royal honours and duties. They were taken up with the care of what they had in possession, and went their way, each man to his farm, saying, "I have worked hard to get my farm, and I cannot afford to let it lie idle." Another was taken up with the care of getting an estate, and went to his merchandise, saying, "I have nobody to keep my shop. I must mind the main chance. If you do not look alive, everybody will run over you. I must attend to my buying and my selling." The worldly-wise make up a very numerous class. The rich man cannot be religious, his position in society prevents; the poor man cannot mind the things of God, he is worn out by earning his daily bread. Thus they all make excuse. Lord, when so many are unwilling, and so many more are occupied with other things, how shall the wedding be furnished with guests?

A third class were violently opposed: they would not be bothered, they had no patience with religious cant: they "took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." These are not so numerous as the others; but yet they are found among us. Sceptics, swearers, revilers of godliness, and "modern thought" men: these revile the cross, and are ferocious against the gospel. When we see these raging and raving, we are apt to ask very mournfully—How can the wedding be furnished with guests?

The most dreadful thought of all remains: *some of the invited had already perished.* The king in his wrath sent his troops and slew the murderers of his messengers, and burned their city. While I have been preaching, many of my hearers have died. Where are they now? If they died without Christ they are now past hope. Ah me! they can never enter now, for the door is shut. If they died in their sins, they are in the outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When you think of it, this is a dark prospect. Men are dying, dying without hope; and those who are yet alive are resolved to perish in like manner, for they are earnestly invited to the feast of love, but they refuse to come. How can the wedding be furnished with guests?

The King tells us the real reason why they would not come: *they were not worthy.* Those who were invited specially, and about whom there was the greatest hope, had nothing in them to encourage that hope: they were not loyal, they were not kind-hearted, they were not honest, they were not worthy, else they would have come to do honour to the son of their King. Their not coming revealed the enmity of their hearts. It was a wretched way of showing their spite to the Prince upon his wedding-day. It is horrible that men refuse Christ and heaven out of enmity to God. Rejectors of Christ are unworthy of pardoning grace, unworthy of a dying Saviour, unworthy of those marriage bonds into which Jesus enters with believing hearts. They

are not worthy in the gospel sense of worthiness, and of course they were far less worthy in a legal sense.

The most mournful spectacle in the world is a heart which refuses the mercy of God. Objection is sometimes made to the doctrine of *total* depravity. I do not know what adjective can be too strong to describe human depravity when I perceive that it refuses God under his loveliest aspect: God in the greatness of his love, God sparing not his own Son. If men turn away from God in anger I can understand it; if men turn aside from God in justice I can understand it; but when they so hate God that they will not even have his salvation, when they refuse pardon through the precious blood of Christ, when they will sooner be damned than reconciled to God, this shows that their heart is desperately wicked. The cross rejected is the clearest proof of the heart depraved. There I leave this mournful subject, and go a step further. Certainly it did seem as if the wedding would not be furnished with guests.

II. Secondly, IT WAS A MOURNFUL PROSPECT. Imagine that there had been no guests at the wedding feast: what then?

First, *it would have been greatly to the king's dishonour.* The Crown Prince is married, and nobody comes to the wedding! The feast is free, costly, plentiful, but nobody will come to it. What an insult? The banqueting-hall is lighted, and the minstrels are in their place, but no eyes or ears are charmed. Oxen and fatlings make the tables groan, but none are there to make the hall resound with shout and song. What a wretched spectacle! Empty halls, unfurnished benches, meat untasted carried out to the dogs! History does not record a more deliberate and unmistakable insult. Let me translate the parable. If no souls are saved, if the great plan of redemption does not save, what a farce the whole business will be! What a dishonour to the name of the great God! Look at the supposition, that you may see the impossibility of it. Think for an instant of a defeated, disappointed, dishonoured Jehovah! Can it be? And yet, if the wedding had not been furnished with guests, the king would have been disappointed and insulted in the tenderest point. If the chosen are not saved, if men are not brought to Christ, then the glorious name of the God of grace is dishonoured. Do you think it can be so?

In the next place, suppose none had come to the wedding feast; then *the king's son would have been grieved.* His wedding, and nobody there! If it were your own, perhaps you could put up with it; for you do not stand in so public a position as the king's son, and you have not provided so vast a banquet. But the king's son! Only imagine that it is his wedding-day, and the servants are mustered in the hall, but not a single guest arrives. He has no one to congratulate him upon the happy day, no one to wish him well, no one to welcome the bride. Now, the same is true of our Lord Jesus Christ: if he dies, and men do not believe in him; if he rises again, and men do not accept him; if he enters heaven as a Prince and a Saviour, and yet no one receives repentance and remission, where is his honour? where is his glory? Look at the dreadful supposition, and think whether it can be. I am sure, as you gaze upon it, you will say, "Impossible! A bleeding Saviour cannot die in vain. Our Christ

could not in death have paid down the ransom price for nothing. He could not have stood a substitute for men, and yet see men lost after all!"

If no guests had arrived, *how disappointed would the Bride have been!* She, too, would have had to share in the failure of the day. Her bridal would not have been remembered with pleasure. She would have been happy in the bridegroom, but also unhappy because of the unkindness shown to him. In vain her rich apparel, and her costly ornaments, for there are no eyes to gaze upon them. If souls are not saved the church misses her greatest joy. When men believe in Jesus, how delighted we are! Our hearts leap for joy when men repent. But if sinners are not saved, if the preaching of the gospel is in vain, if they will not come to Christ, then are saints full of heaviness, and the church cries out in her anguish, "Hast thou forgotten to be gracious?"

Had none come to the marriage feast, *a store of provisions would have been wasted.* The King says, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed." See the bullocks roasting whole! See yonder fatted calf killed for the feast! Mark how the sheep are led to the slaughter! All this will remain untasted. Yonder dainty dishes, and flowing bowls, and luscious fruits will have none to enjoy them. It will be a wretched business indeed! I want you to look at the dreadful picture till it vanishes out of sight. Can it be that Jesus has made himself the heavenly bread, and none will feed on him, or at the best a very few? Can it be that he has provided a robe of righteousness, and nobody will wear it? Is heaven prepared, and will it remain half occupied? I do but suppose it for the moment, to make you see what a melancholy fact a failure in the scheme of mercy would be.

Would it not have meant, also, *the enemy's triumph?* The king's foes would have heard of it, and laughed him to scorn. At a royal wedding he could not command guests! How they would scoff at his wasted provision! "Ha, ha! Ha, ha!" The story would have been told on every ale-bench. The sons of Belial would make rare mirth of it. The King, the Prince, the Bride would all have been ridiculed, because of a wedding in empty halls, a feast with phantom guests! I do not believe that God intends to let Satan triumph in this way. I cannot imagine that he will allow the powers of darkness thus to open their wicked mouths against him. If free-will refuses the gift of God, free-grace will come in and win the day. I have shown you already how free-will threatens to empty the banqueting-hall, and dishonour the King, the Son, and the Bride; and if the business had been left to the free-will of man, this is the result which would have come of it: a God dishonoured, and men preferring to die rather than accept life through Jesus Christ. Then it could never have been said that "the wedding was furnished with guests."

III. Let us go a step further and notice that in the parable THIS CATASTROPHE WAS GRACIOUSLY PREVENTED. "The wedding was furnished with guests."

We are very much in the same case to-day as the servants were in when the invited ones would not come. We preach and teach the gospel, but we have to complain that so many will not come to the

banquet of grace. God gives us many souls, but not so many as we desire. We are eager for many more, and we begin to be afraid lest, after all, God should not be glorified as we wish that he should be. In the parable an unfurnished banquet was prevented, and so it will be in the reality. How was the calamity averted?

It was prevented, first, by *a fuller invitation*. At first the heralds only called those who had been previously bidden, a sort of aristocracy of hopeful persons. As these would not come, we read, "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." They went out, not to a select band, but to all whom they might find. Brethren, it is a grand thing when we get a clearer idea of what the gospel really is. The more evangelical our notions become, so that we are prepared to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven and to say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," the more we may hope for large success. If, by my preaching, I lead a man to look at himself, to see whether there is anything in him which entitles him to believe, I practically hide the gospel from him. If I preach up character unduly, so that the man mainly enquires whether he has that character, I fix his eye upon himself; and this is not what I should aim at. If I go forth and gather together as many as I find, both good and bad, then their thoughts are on the banquet rather than on themselves. We want men to look to Jesus, and therefore we cry, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." When we get upon clear gospel lines, and keep there, we may expect to see the arm of the Lord revealed, and the wedding furnished with guests.

Again, *the invitation was now given more publicly*. They had simply gone to the houses of the invited guests, and said, "All things are ready: come." But now the servants go to the chief places of concourse; and they cry aloud, and spare not among the crowds of men. One has gone to the market-cross; another is preaching where four ways meet. Hark to the voice of one upon the village green, and to the songs of others as they traverse the back slum! You cannot now go along a street without hearing the news of the great wedding feast. Many will be brought in when many are eager to bring them in. God is pleased to own the means which he has himself ordained. The more constant and public the proclamation of the gospel becomes, the more numerously will men be saved through the Spirit of God. Then is the set time to favour Zion come. We are not to hide our lamp under a bushel. He that knows the gospel should speak it out as plainly as he can, and let his voice be as the silver trumpets of jubilee, that every ear may hear. It came to pass that the king's message was more widely made known, and thus "the wedding was furnished with guests."

Another matter assisted: *the servants were now thoroughly aroused*. I am sure I should have felt dreadfully agitated to see all those provisions and none coming to eat them. Think of the halls decorated, the cooks working day and night, the big fires burning, bullocks roasting, the wines on the lees set abroach, and yet no guests. It would have worried me greatly, and you too. You would have said, "It cannot be, it must not be, we cannot bear it. The king, how

sadly he must feel! The good prince, how bitter it is for him! The dear bride, what must be her sadness when this great insult is put upon her! Here, I must fetch in some guests, or die in the attempt." I am sure we should have travelled six ways at once if we could; we should have invited with a thousand mouths if possible. Getting hold of one man's coat and of another man's sleeve, we should have compelled them to come in. This, also, is the Lord's way of blessing men. He arouses his own people, makes them sorrowful for the sins of the times, and then they grow earnest and troubled, and so they lay themselves out to snatch men as brands from the burning. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." The want of travailing causes the absence of conversion. When we begin to sigh, and cry, and mourn, because the ways of God are forsaken, then our earnestness moves the heart, both of God and man, and the guests come to the wedding.

Again, the calamity of a wedding without guests was prevented by *a certain secret power which went with the messengers*. We read that they "gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good." They did not merely invite them, but they gathered them in. Now people are not to be gathered in in great numbers all of a sudden, and led to a feast by mere words. Words are but air. There is nothing in our words to make men come to Jesus unless the Lord works by them. Yet the guests did come in shoals. An influence went with the words of those servants which drew the people together; they could not wish to stay away; they came gladly. Their wills were sweetly inclined, and they thronged the palace. Beloved, all the hope of our ministry lies in the Spirit of God operating upon the spirits of men. I want all the members of this church to feel this more deeply and practically than ever. Do not put trust in the preacher: if he happens to be away, do not think that God is tied to him. Look for a blessing upon the gospel itself whoever preaches it. If the Holy Ghost be with us we shall see thousands flocking to Jesus. No sinner will ever come to Christ apart from the quickening, enlightening, drawing, converting power of the Holy Ghost, supernaturally exercised upon the conscience and heart. Let us believe this; and next, let us be assured that the Spirit of God is with us, and let us then go forth with all boldness. To the street-corner, the cottage, the lodging-house, the wayside, let us go forth and publish abroad the invitation of the great King: "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage."

Thus you have seen the outward means by which the Holy Spirit brings men to Jesus, and the wedding is furnished with guests.

IV. I close by noticing, in the fourth place, that IN THE END THE FEAST WAS A GLORIOUS SUCCESS. "The wedding was furnished with guests." Guests are a part of the furniture of a wedding feast. You may pile on your gold and silver plate, hang up your banners, load your tables, and sound your music; but if you have no guests the feast is a failure. It is our solemn conviction that the Lord our God has never failed yet, and that he never will fail. We believe that the Lord's eternal purpose will stand, and that he will do all his pleasure. We believe in no blind fate, but we trust in a predestination which is

full of eyes, which accomplishes its purpose to the least jot and tittle. God's greatest work is redemption; will he fail in it? Salvation is the focus of his glory; shall this be frustrated? If God were to fail in connection with the cross, it would be a failure indeed; God would be dishonoured, and his crown jewels cast into the mire. But it shall not be.

Turn to the parable, and we find *there were sufficient guests:* "the wedding was furnished with guests." There were as many guests as were necessary to the honour of the King, and his Son, and his Bride. Oh yes, in the gathering up and consummation of all things, the wedding of the Lord Jesus will be amply furnished with guests: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." There will be no disappointment to Christ at the last great day. Satan may whisper disaster and disappointment to us at this hour, and for the moment it may seem as if the forces of darkness triumphed; but the end is not yet. The will of God, so full of grace and mercy, shall be accomplished, the preparations of grace shall be used, and the purpose of love fulfilled. As the wedding was furnished with guests so shall heaven be filled with "a number which no man can number."

The feast was more of a success than it would have been had there been no opposition. *The persons who came to the wedding were more grateful* than the first invited might have been if they had come. The richer sort had a good dinner every day. Those farmers could always kill a fat sheep; and those merchants could always buy a calf. "Thank you for nothing," they would have said to the king if they had accepted his invitation. But these poor beggars picked off the streets, they had not tasted meat for months. Their half-starved bodies welcomed the fatlings. How glad they were! One of them said to the other, "It's a long time since you and I sat down to such a joint as this," and the other answered, "I can hardly believe that I am really in a palace dining with a king. Why, yesterday I begged all the day, and only had twopence at night. Long live the king, say I, and blessings on the prince and his bride!" I warrant, they were thankful for such a feast. They said it was an ill wind that blew nobody any good: because their betters had refused to come, there was now room for them. When the Lord saves great sinners, such as you and me, he wins warm hearts for himself. When the Lord saves unlikely ones, he gets unusual thankfulness. When he brings in the drunkard and the profane, the unclean and the hardened, and makes them pure, and holy, and puts them among the children, what gratitude he gets! The Pharisee may ask Christ to a cold dinner, but it is the woman that was a sinner who will wash his feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. If some of you moralists get saved—and God grant you may!—you will never prize the precious blood so much as those do who are washed by it from foulest stains.

The joy that day was much more expressed than it would have been had others come. Those ladies and gentlemen who were first invited, if they had come to the wedding, would have seated themselves there in a very stiff and proper manner. Dear me, what a fine thing propriety is! And yet, what a dead thing it is! One said to me the other day, "I have gone to my place of worship for many years, and

nobody ever did speak to me that I know of, and nobody ever will; for we are all too respectable to know one another." You know the dignified style of self-satisfied people. Among such there is no cordiality, no freshness, no sweet naturalness. Did you ever attend a breakfast or a dinner of beggars? Did you ever see a company of very hungry people feeding to their heart's content? They make a merry clatter; they are not muzzled by propriety; they are glad at the sight of every dish. They look at the waiters as angels; and when the hurrahing comes to be done, you admire the strength of their lungs. The dull monotony of respectability knows no joy like that which comes to poverty when it feasts to the full at the table of bounty. The Crown Prince was happier that day among his poor subjects than he would have been among the grandees and the fashionables. Those paupers, those labourers, those tramps, those hedge-birds, those were the fellows to make merry. To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. Up in heaven they sing like the voice of many waters and like great thunder, because they have been cleansed from many sins and have partaken of great grace. Let the Pharisee and the moralist refuse the gospel; there are those about who, in accepting it, will do it greater honour than their dull souls could ever render to it. Thus the wedding was furnished with guests, who expressed their joy enthusiastically.

How the provisions were relished! It does one good to see a hungry man eat his food. To him even every bitter thing is sweet. He does not turn over his food and cut off every little bit of gristle, as some of you do because of your delicate appetites. The true gospel hearer hearkens to the text—"Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." He does not act the critic, and cavil at this expression and that. He is too sharp-set to be particular about the dishes and the carving. We marvel sometimes at the capacity of hungry men; there is no end to it; and it is the same with spiritual as with natural hunger. I think I can tell what happened at that wedding: the Bride nudged the Bridegroom and said, "See these poor people eat! Is it not a pleasure to give one's oxen and fatlings where they are so much needed?" The Bridegroom was as happy as he could be, for he was of a sympathizing heart, and he greatly rejoiced in the joy of the poor people around him. The king himself that day was gladdened as he saw what a gallant company of trenchermen they were, and how there was no niggling, nor finding fault, but only unbroken enjoyment and gratitude. The choicest kind of guests had been collected if the object was to give joy. Ah dear friends! if you have a deep sense of sin, you will greatly love free grace and dying love. This is the lack of certain gentlemen who are always finding fault with the gospel: they never knew their own state by nature and by practice, and therefore they do not prize salvation. If they had felt a few lashes of the ten-thonged whip of the law upon their bare consciences, they would relish gospel forgiveness far more. He that has been in the prison of conviction prizes blood-bought freedom. He that has felt the chains of sin values the liberty wherewith Christ makes him free. So I say, that inasmuch as these poor creatures were brought in from the streets, and their splendid appetites enjoyed the feast, the wedding festival was no failure, but all the

greater success, because of the king's enemies. The wedding was furnished with guests—guests who enjoyed the abundance provided by the King.

Certainly, *the occasion became more famous* than it would otherwise have been. If the feast had gone on as usual it would have been only one among many such things; but now this royal banquet was the only one of its kind, unique, unparalleled. To gather in poor men off the streets, labouring men and idle men, bad men and good men, to the wedding of the Crown Prince—this was a new thing under the sun. Everybody talked of it. There were songs made about it, and these were sung in the king's honour where none honoured kings before. In the kitchens, among the servants, this was a fine story to tell by the fireside, while Mary and Jane wished they had been there to see. In every lodging-house for years to come this would be the favourite story—the tale of the poor man's prince, and the needy man's queen. On the exchange and in the market men talked of the brave bride and bridegroom who had defied the customs of fashion, and had done a deed so daring in its goodness. Was ever such a thing heard of before? Here was a feast for men who never feasted before! Sensible men said, "And nothing could be better: they were feeding those that wanted feeding: they were giving good cheer to those who have little enough of it." Among the poor themselves the Prince's name was very famous, while the portrait of the Princess was nailed up over the mantel-piece. Children said to one another, "My father went to the wedding of the imperial prince." To many it seemed like a story out of the Arabian Nights. It did not read like a piece of common history at all, but like a fairy tale of the age of gold. Dear friends, when the Lord saved some of us by his grace, it was no common event. When he brought us great sinners to his feet, and washed us, and clothed us, and fed us, and made us his own, it was a wonder to be talked of for ever and ever. We will never leave off praising his name throughout eternity. That which looked as though it would defame the King turned out to his honour, and "the wedding was furnished with guests."

One thing more: *the king's liberality was all the better seen.* If those who were first bidden had put in an appearance, they would have come arrayed in their own scarlet and fine linen. Some of the gentlemen would have bought a new suit on purpose. You may depend upon it, all the cunning women in the city would have been employed to get their ladyships ready for the banquet, that they might have honour in the court that day. Now these fine clothes would have been more for the glory of those who came in them, than for the honour of the King. There was nothing of this among those who were gathered from the highways. They were in sorry gear. It was difficult, perhaps, in some cases, to tell which was the original stuff of their garments, so patched and mended were they. Anyhow, they were a ragged regiment; and what was the consequence? Why, then they must all be dressed in the Prince's own livery, and all the glory of their apparel must be unto him. He said to his servants, "Go to my wardrobe. Bring forth changes of raiment." Everyone that came in to the feast was invited to put on the king's wedding garments.

When he came in to see the guests, it was a grand sight, for everybody was royally arrayed. The king's wedding robes were much better than his subjects' best suits. It was a grand sight to see so many all in one royal livery; every guest wearing the uniform of mercy. So is it with us poor sinners, saved by grace. If we had possessed any true righteousness of our own we should have worn it; but now we count our own righteousness but dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in him. His righteousness decorates all the saints: they could not be better arrayed. Thus is the feast made more glorious than it otherwise would have been, and the wedding is furnished with guests.

How I wish that I could gather in many this morning, both bad and good! I mean by good, those who are comparatively so as to their moral conduct. You are bidden to come to the wedding-feast of love. But even if you are bad, and obliged to own that you are so, I am equally anxious to gather you in to the feast. Do you ask me: What are we to do? What were these persons to do? To come just as they were, and freely receive what the king had freely provided. Sometimes at our treats for Sunday-school children every child is told to bring his own mug and plate; but it is not so with our great King. His banquet is too royal for that. You are to bring nothing. Still, everybody must go home and wash, must he not? No, the washing and the clothing shall all be done for you at the King's palace. Come as you are. "But what do you mean by coming?" We mean trusting: trust your soul with Jesus Christ, and he will save it. Trust him, and you shall know that he died in your room, place, and stead, so that, believing in him, you shall not perish, but have everlasting life. May the Holy Spirit lead you to believe in Jesus, that is, trust him.

I have told you the gospel, and the whole of it. Trust the crucified Saviour, and you shall live. Jesus says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Do not look within to see what is there, but look to Jesus hanging on the cross. A look at Christ crucified will save you. Look, dear girls, young as you are, look to Jesus now! Look, ye grey-headed men and women who have never looked before: look now! Strangers and foreigners, who have not heard this word before, there is life in a look at the Crucified One for you! Ye guiltiest of the guilty, and ye most amiable of the amiable, turn away from anything there is in yourselves, bad or good, and look to Jesus only. Receive from Jesus all he brings you—pardon, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, himself. He that comes to a wedding feast has nothing to do but to eat and to drink. Give your mind up to this delightful exercise. Take the food which God provides you. You shall do good works afterwards, for they will follow as a consequence of the strength which comes of receiving heavenly food through faith; but just now eat, drink, and be merry, as becomes a Prince's marriage. May the Father be pleased, his Son be honoured, and his church be comforted through you! Amen, and Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xxi. 33—46; xxii. 1—14.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—42 (Vers. I.), 504, 488.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BLESSING OF FULL ASSURANCE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 13TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."—1 John v. 13.

JOHN wrote to believers—"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." It is worthy of note that all the epistles are so written. They are not letters to everybody, they are letters to those who are called to be saints. It ought to strike some of you with awe when you open the Bible and think how large a part of it is not directed to you. You may read it, and God's Holy Spirit may graciously bless it to you, but it is not directed to you. You are reading another man's letter: thank God that you are permitted to read it, but long to be numbered with those to whom it is directed. Thank God much more if any part of it should be used of the Holy Ghost for your salvation. The fact that the Holy Spirit speaks to the churches and to believers in Christ should make you bow the knee and cry to God to put you among the children, that this Book may become your Book from beginning to end, that you may read its precious promises as made to you. This solemn thought may not have struck some of you: let it impress you now.

We do not wonder that certain men do not receive the epistles, for they were not written to them. Why should they cavil at words which are addressed to men of another sort from themselves? Yet we do not marvel, for we knew it would be so. Here is a will, and you begin to read it; but you do not find it interesting: it is full of words and terms which you do not take the trouble to understand, because they have no relation to yourself; but should you, in reading that will, come upon a clause in which an estate is left to you, I warrant you that the nature of the whole document will seem changed to you. You will be anxious now to understand the terms, and to make sure of the clauses, and you will even wish to remember every word of the clause which refers to yourself. O dear friends, may you read the Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ as a testament of

love to yourselves, and then you will prize it beyond all the writings of the sages.

This leads me to make the second remark, that as these things are written to believers, believers ought especially to make themselves acquainted with them, and to search into their meaning and intent. John says, "These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God." Do not, I beseech you, neglect to read what the Holy Ghost has taken care to write to you. It is not merely John that writes. John is inspired of the Lord, and these things are written to you by the Spirit of God. Give earnest heed to every single word of what God has sent as his own epistle to your hearts. Value the Scriptures. Luther said that "he would not be in paradise, if he might, without the Word of the Lord; but with the Word he could live in hell itself." He said at another time that "he would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible." The Scriptures are everything to the Christian—his meat and his drink. The saint can say, "O how I love thy law!" If we cannot say so, something is wrong with us. If we have lost our relish for Holy Scripture, we are out of condition, and need to pray for spiritual health.

This much is the porch of my sermon, let us now enter more fully into our subject, noticing, first, that *John wrote with a special purpose;* and then going on to assert, secondly, that *this purpose we ought to follow up.*

I. First, JOHN WROTE WITH A SPECIAL PURPOSE. Men do not write well unless they have some end in writing. To sit down with paper and ink before you, and so much space to fill up, will ensure very poor writing. John knew what he was at. His intent and aim were clear to his own mind, and he tells us what they were.

According to the text the beloved apostle had one clear purpose, which branched out into three.

To begin with, *John wrote that we might enjoy the full assurance of our salvation.* "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

Many who believe on the name of Jesus are not sure that they have eternal life; they only hope so. Occasionally they have assurance, but the joy is not abiding. They are like a minister I have heard of, who said he felt assured of his salvation, "except when the wind was in the east." It is a wretched thing to be so subject to circumstances as many are. What is true when the wind is in the soft south or the reviving west is equally true when the wind is neither good for man nor beast. John would not have our assurance vary with the weather-glass, nor turn with the vane. He says, "These things have I written unto you, that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life." He would have us certain that we are partakers of the new life, and so *know* it as to reap the golden fruit of such knowledge, and be filled with joy and peace through believing.

I speak affectionately to the weaker ones, who cannot yet say that they know they have believed. I speak not to your condemnation, but to your consolation. Full assurance is not essential to salvation, but it is essential to satisfaction. May you get it—may you get it at once; at any rate, may you never be satisfied to live without it. You may have full assurance. You may have it without personal revelations:

it is wrought in us by the Word of God. These things are written that you may have it; and we may be sure that the means used by the Spirit are equal to the effect which he desires. Under the guidance of the Spirit of God, John so wrote as to attain his end in writing. What, then, has he written with the design of making us know that we have eternal life? Go through the whole of his Epistle, and you will see that it all presses in that direction; but we shall not at this present have time to do more than glance through this chapter.

He begins thus: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Do you believe that Jesus is the anointed of God? Is he so to you? Is he anointed as your prophet, priest, and king? Have you realized his anointing so as to put your trust in him? Do you receive Jesus as appointed of God to be the Mediator, the Propitiation for sin, the Saviour of men? If so, you are born of God. "How may I know this?" Brethren, our evidence is the witness of God himself as here recorded. We need no other witness. Suppose an angel were to tell you that you are born of God, would that be a more sure testimony than the infallible Scripture? If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. John has thus positively declared the truth, that you may know that you have eternal life. Can anything be more clear than this?

The loving spirit of John leads him to say, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Do you love God? Do you love his Only-begotten Son? You can answer those two questions surely. I knew a dear Christian woman who would sometimes say, "I know that I love Jesus; but my fear is that he does not love me." Her doubt used to make me smile, for it never could have occurred to me. If I love him, I know it is because he first loved me. Love to God in us is always the work of God's love towards us. Jesus loved us, and gave himself for us, and therefore we love him in return. Love to Jesus is an effect which proves the existence of its cause. Do you love Jesus? Do you feel a delight in him? Is his name as music to your ear, and honey to your mouth? Do you love to hear him extolled? Ah, dear friends! I know that to many of you a sermon full of his dear name is as a royal banquet; and if there is no Christ in a discourse, it is empty, and vain, and void to you. Is it not so? If you do indeed love him that begat and him that is begotten of him, then this is one of the things that is written "that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

John goes on to give another evidence: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Do you love God? and do you love his children? Listen to another word from the same apostle: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." That may appear to be a very small evidence; but I can assure you it has often been a great comfort to my soul. I know I love the brethren; I can say unto my Lord,

> "Is there a lamb among thy flock
> I would disdain to feed?"

I would gladly cheer and comfort the least of his people. Well, then, if I love the brethren, I love the Elder Brother. If I love

the babes, I love the Father; and I know that I have passed from death unto life. Brethren, take this evidence home in all its force. It is conclusive: John has said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"; and he would not have spoken so positively if it had not been even so. Brethren, never be content with sentimental comforts; set your feet firmly upon the rock of fact and truth. True Christian assurance is not a matter of guesswork, but of mathematical precision. It is capable of logical proof, and is no rhapsody or poetical fiction. We are told by the Holy Ghost that, if we love the brethren, we have passed from death to life. You can tell whether you love the brethren, as such, for their Master's sake, and for the truth's sake that is in them; and if you can truly say that you thus love them, then you may know that you have eternal life.

Our apostle gives us this further evidence: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." Obedience is the grand test of love. If you are living after your own will, and pay no homage to God, you are none of his. If you never think of the Lord Jesus as your Master, and never recognize the claims of God, and never wish to be obedient to his will, you are not in possession of eternal life. If you desire to be obedient, and prove that desire by your actions, then you have the divine life within you. Judge yourselves. Is the tenor of your life obedience or disobedience? By the fruit you can test the root and the sap.

But note, that this obedience must be cheerful and willing. No doubt some for a while obey the commands of God unwillingly. They do not like them, though they bow to them. They fret and grizzle because of the restraints of piety; and this proves that they are hypocrites. What you wish to do you practically are doing in the sight of God. If there could be such a thing as holiness forced upon a man, it would be unholiness. O my hearer, it may be that you cannot fall into a certain line of sin; but if you could, you would: your desires show what you really are. I have heard of Christian people, so-called, going to sinful amusements, just, as they say, to enjoy a little pleasure. Ah well, we see where you are! Where your pleasure is, your heart is. If you enjoy the pleasures of the world, you are of the world, and with the world you will be condemned. If God's commands are grievous to you, then you are a rebel at heart. Loyal subjects delight in the royal law. "His commandments are not grievous." I said to one who came to join the church the other day, "I suppose you are not perfect"? and the reply was, "No, sir, I wish I might be." I said, "And suppose you were"? "Oh, then," she said, "that would be heaven to me." So it would be to me. We delight in the law of God after the inward man. Oh, that we could perfectly obey in thought, and word, and deed! This is our view of heaven. Thus we sing of it:

> "There shall we see his face,
> And never, never sin;
> There from the rivers of his grace
> Drink endless pleasures in."

We would scarce ask to be rid of sorrow, if we might be rid of sin. We would bear any burden cheerfully if we could live without the slightest fault of omission or commission. When we are without spot we shall also be without grief. His commandments are not grievous, but they are ways of pleasantness and peace to us. Do you feel that you love the ways of God, that you desire holiness, and follow after it joyfully? Then, dear friends, you have eternal life, and these are the sure evidences of it. Obedience, holiness, delight in God never came into a human heart except from a heavenly hand. Wherever they are found they prove that the Lord has implanted eternal life, for they are much too precious to be buried away in a dead soul.

John then proceeds to mention three witnesses. Now, dear hearers, do you know anything about these three witnesses? "There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Do you know "the Spirit"? Has the Spirit of God quickened you, changed you, illuminated you, sanctified you? Does the Spirit of God dwell in you? Do you feel his sacred impulses? Is he the essence of the new life within you? Do you know him as clothing you with his light and power? If so, you are alive unto God. Next, do you know "the water," the purifying power of the death of Christ? Does the crucified Lord crucify your sins? Is the water applied to you to remove the power of sin? Do you now long to perfect holiness in the fear of God? This proves that you have eternal life. Do you also know "the blood"? This is a wretched age, in which men think little of the precious blood. My heart has well-nigh been broken, and my very flesh has been enfeebled, as I have thought upon the horrible things which have been spoken of late about the precious blood by men called Christian ministers. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." Beloved friends, do you know the power of the blood to take away sin, the power of the blood to speak peace to the conscience, the power of the blood to give access to the throne of grace? Do you know the quickening, restoring, cheering power of the precious blood of Christ which is set forth in the Lord's Supper by the fruit of the vine? Then in the mouth of these three witnesses shall the fact of your having eternal life be fully established. If the Spirit of God be in you, he is the earnest of your eternal inheritance. If the water has washed you, then you are the Lord's. Jesus said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." But ye are washed, and therefore the Lord's. If the precious blood has cleansed you from the guilt of sin, you know that it has also purchased you from death, and it is to you the guarantee of eternal life. I pray that you may from this moment enjoy the combined light of these three lamps of God—"the spirit, and the water, and the blood," and so have full assurance of faith.

One thing more I would notice. Read the ninth verse: the apostle puts our faith and assurance on the ground that we receive "the witness of God." If I believe that I am saved because of this, that, and the other, I may be mistaken: the only sure ground is "the witness of God." The inmost heart of Christian faith is that we take God at his

word; and we must accept that word, not because of the probabilities of its statements, nor because of the confirmatory evidence of science and philosophy, but simply and alone because the Lord has spoken it. Many professing Christians fall sadly short on this point. They dare to judge the Word instead of bowing before it. They do not sit at the Master's feet, but become doctors themselves. I thank God that I believe everything that God has spoken, whether I am able to see its reasons or not. To me the fact that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it stands in the place of all argument, either for or against. If Jehovah says so, so it is. Do you accept the witness of God? If not, you have made him a liar, and the truth is not in you; but if you have received "the witness of God," then this is his witness, that "He hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." I say again, if your faith stands in the wisdom of men, and is based upon the cleverness of a preacher, it will fail you; but if it stands on the sure Word of the Lord it will stand for ever, and this may be to you a special token that you have eternal life. I have said enough upon this subject; oh that God may bless it to you! May we be enabled, from what John has written, to gather beyond doubt that we have the life of God within our souls.

Furthermore, *John wrote that we might know our spiritual life to be eternal.* Please notice this, for there are some of God's children who have not yet learned this cheering lesson. The life of God in the soul is not transient, but abiding; not temporary, but eternal. Some think that the life of God in the believer's soul may die out; but how, then, could it be eternal? If it die it is not eternal life. If it be eternal life it cannot die. I know that modern deceivers deny that eternal means eternal, but you and I have not learned their way of pumping the meanings out of the words which the Holy Spirit uses. We believe that "eternal" means endless, and that there can be no termination to eternal life. I am confident that if I have eternal life, I shall live eternally. Brethren, the Lord would have us know that we have eternal life.

Learn, then, the doctrine of the eternity of the life given in the new birth. It must be eternal life, because it is "the life of God." We are born again of the Spirit of God by a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. We are said to be "made partakers of the divine nature." Surely, this means, among other things, that we receive an undying life; for immortality is of the essence of the life of God. His name is "I am that I am." He hath life in himself, and the Son hath life in himself, and of this life we are the receivers. This was his purpose concerning his Son, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. If it be the life of God which is in a believer—and certainly it is, for he hath begotten us again—then that life must be eternal. As children of God, we partake of his life, and as heirs of God, we inherit his eternity. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ calls the life of his people eternal life. How often do I quote this text! It seems to lie on the tip of my tongue: "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall

never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." And again, "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." It is not temporary life, not life which at a certain period must grow old and die, but everlasting life. "It shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This is the life of Christ within the soul. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." If our life is Christ's life, we shall not die until Christ dies. If our life is hidden in him, it will never be discovered and destroyed until Christ himself is destroyed. Let us rest in this.

Mark again how our Lord has put it: "Because I live, ye shall live also." As long, then, as Jesus lives, his people must live, for the argument will always be the same, "Because I live, ye shall live also." We are so one with Christ that while the head lives the members cannot die. We are so one with Christ that the challenge is given, "Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" A list is added of things which may be supposed to separate, but we are told that they cannot do so, for "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Is it not clear, then, that we are quickened with a life so heavenly and divine that we can never die? John tells us in this very chapter, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." He does not go back to his old sin, he does not again come under the dominion of sin; but, "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Beloved, I entreat you to keep a hard and firm grip of this blessed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. How earnestly do I long "that ye may know that ye have eternal life"! Away with your doctrine of being alive in Christ to-day and dead to-morrow. Poor, miserable doctrine that! Hold fast to eternal salvation through the eternal covenant carried out by eternal love unto eternal life; for the Spirit of God has written these things unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.

Once more, according to the Authorized text, though not according to the Revised Version, *John desired the increase and confirmation of their faith.* He says, "That ye might believe on the name of the Son of God." John wrote to those who believed, that they might believe in a more emphatic sense. As our Saviour has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly, so does John write, that having faith we may have more of it. Come, beloved, listen for a moment to this! You have the milk of faith, but God wills that you should have the cream of assurance! He would increase your faith. May you believe more extensively. Perhaps you do not believe all the truth, because you have not yet perceived it. There were members of the Corinthian church who had not believed in the resurrection of the dead, and there were Galatians who were very cloudy upon justification by faith. Many a Christian man is narrow in the range of his faith from ignorance of the Lord's mind. Like certain tribes of Israel, they have conquered a scanty territory as yet, though all the land is theirs from Dan to Beersheba. John would have us

push out our fences, and increase the enclosure of our faith. Let us believe all that God has revealed, for every truth is precious and practically useful. Perhaps your doctrinal belief has been poor and thin. Oh that the Lord would turn the water into wine! Many of you live upon milk, and yet your years qualify you to feed on meat. Why keep to babes' diet? You that believe are exhorted to "go in and out, and find pasture"; range throughout the whole revelation of God.

It will be well for you if your faith also increases intensively. Oh that you may more fully believe what you do believe! We need deeper insight and firmer conviction. We do not half believe, as yet, any of us. Many of you only skim the pools of truth. Blessed is the wing which brushes the surface of the river of life; but infinitely more blessed is it to plunge into the depths of it. This is John's desire for you, that you believe with all your heart, and soul, and strength.

He would have you believe more constantly, so that you may say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." It is not always so with us. We are at times chicken-hearted. We play the man to-day, and the mouse to-morrow. Lord have mercy upon us: we are an inconsistent people, fickle as the wind. The Lord would have us abide always in him with strong and mighty confidence, being rooted and built up in him.

He would have us trust courageously. Some can believe in a small way about small things. Oh for a boundless trust in the infinite God! We need more of a venturesome faith: the faith to do and dare. Often we see the way of power, but have not the faith which would be equal to it. See Peter walking on the sea! I do not advise any of you to try it, neither did our Lord advise Peter to do so: we do well enough if we walk uprightly on land. But when Peter had once taken a few steps on the sea, he ought to have known that his Lord could help him all the rest of the way; but alas! his faith failed, and he began to sink. He could have walked all the way to Jesus if he had but believed right on. So is it with us: our faith is good enough for a spurt, but it lacks staying power. Oh, may God give us to believe, so that we may not only trip over a wave or two, but walk on the water to the end! If the Lord bids you, you may go through fire and not be burned, through the floods and not be drowned. Such a fearless, careless, conquering faith may the Lord work in us!

We need also to have our faith increased in the sense of its becoming more practical. Some people have a fine new faith, as pretty as the bright poker in the parlour, and as useless. We want an every-day faith, not to look at, but to use. Brothers and sisters, we need faith for the kitchen and the pantry, as well as for the drawing-room and the conservatory. We need workshop faith, as well as prayer-meeting faith. We need faith as to the common things of life, and the trying things of death. We could do with less paint if we had more power. We need less varnish and more verity. God give to you that you may believe on the name of the Son of God with a sound, common-sense faith, which will be found wearable, and washable, and workable throughout life.

We need to believe more joyfully. Oh what a blessed thing it is when

you reach the rest and joy of faith! If we would truly believe the promise of God, and rest in the Lord's certain fulfilment of it, we might be as happy as the angels. I notice very early in the morning how the birds begin to sing: before the sun is up or even the first grey tints of morning light are visible, the little songsters are awake and singing. Too often we refuse to sing until the sun is more than up, and noon is near. Shame on us! Will we never trust our God? Will we never praise him for favours to come? Oh for a faith that can sing through the night and through the winter! Faith that can live on a promise is the faith of God's elect. You will never enjoy heaven below until you believe without wavering. The Lord give you such faith.

II. Thus I have gone through my first head, and taken nearly all the time. I must now come to push of pike, as the old soldiers used to say. We must drive our teaching home. THE PURPOSE WHICH JOHN HAD IN HIS MIND WE OUGHT TO FOLLOW UP. If he wished us to know that we have eternal life, brothers and sisters, let us try to know it. The Word of God was written for this purpose; let us use it for its proper end. The whole of these Scriptures were written that "we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing we might have life through his name." This Book is written to you who believe, that you may know that you believe. Will you suffer your Bibles to be a failure to you? Will you live in perpetual questioning and doubt? If so, the Book has missed its mark for you. The Bible is sent that you may have full assurance of your possession of eternal life; do not, therefore, dream that it will be presumptuous on your part to aspire to it. Our conscience tells us that we ought to seek full assurance of salvation. It cannot be right for us to be children of God, and not to know our own Father. How can we kneel down and say, "Our Father which art in heaven," when we do not know whether he is our Father or not? Will not a life of doubt tend to be a life of falsehood? May we not be using language which is not true to our consciousness? Can you sing joyful hymns which you fear are not true to you? Will you join in worship when your heart does not know that God is your God? Until the spirit of adoption enables you to cry, "Abba, Father," where is your love to God? Can you rest? Dare you rest, while it is a question whether you are saved or not? Can you go home to your dinner to-day and enjoy your meal, while there is a question about your soul's eternal life? Oh, be not so foolhardy as to run risks on that matter! I pray you, make sure work for eternity. If you leave anything in uncertainty, let it concern your body or your estate, but not your soul. Conscience bids you seek to know that you have eternal life, for without this knowledge many duties will be impossible of performance. Many Scriptures which I cannot quote this morning stir you up to this duty. Are you not bidden to make your calling and election sure? Are you not a thousand times over exhorted to rejoice in the Lord, and to give thanks continually? But how can you rejoice, if the dark suspicion haunts you, that perhaps, after all, you have not the life of God? You must get this question settled, or you cannot rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Come, brothers and sisters, I beseech you, as you would follow Scripture, and obey the

Lord's precepts, get the assurance without which you cannot obey them.

Listen, as I close, to this mass of reasons why each believer should seek to know that he has eternal life. Here they are. Assurance of your salvation will bring you "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." If you know that you are saved, you can sit down in poverty, or in sickness, or under slander, and feel perfectly content. Full assurance is the Koh-i-noor amongst the jewels wherewith the heavenly Bridegroom adorns his spouse. Assurance is a mountain of spices, a land that floweth with milk and honey. To be the assured possessor of eternal life is to find a paradise beneath the stars, where the mountains and the hills break forth before you into singing.

Full assurance will sometimes overflow in cataracts of delight. Peace flows like a river, and here and there it leaps in cascades of ecstatic joy. There are seasons when the plant of peace is in flower, and then it sheds a perfume as of myrrh and cassia. Oh, the blessedness of the man who knows that he has eternal life! Sometimes in our room alone, when we have been enjoying this assurance, we have laughed outright, for we could not help it. If anybody had wondered why a man was laughing by himself alone, we could have explained that it was nothing ridiculous which had touched us, but our mouth was filled with laughter because the Lord had done great things for us, whereof we were glad. That religion which sets no sweetmeats on the table is a niggardly housekeeper. I do not wonder that some people give up their starveling religion: it is hardly worth the keeping. The child of God who knows that he has eternal life goes to school, but he has many a holiday; and he anticipates that day of home-going when he shall see the face of his Beloved for ever.

Brethren, full assurance will give us the full result of the gospel. The gospel ought to make us holy; and so it will when we are in full possession of it. The gospel ought to make us separate from the world, the gospel ought to make us lead a heavenly life here below; and so it will if we drink deep draughts of it; but if we take only a sip of it now and again, we give it no chance of working out its design in us. Do not paddle about the margin of the water of life, but first wade in up to your knees, and then hasten to plunge into the waters to swim in. Beware of contentment with shallow grace. Prove what the grace of God can do for you by giving yourself up to its power.

Full assurance gives a man a grateful zeal for the God he loves. These are the people that will go to the Congo for Jesus, for they know they are his. These are the people that will lay down their all for Christ, for Christ is theirs. These are the people that will bear scorn and shame and misrepresentation for the truth's sake, for they know that they have eternal life. These are they that will keep on preaching and teaching, spending and working, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and they know it. Men will do little for what they doubt, and much for what they believe. If you have lost your title deeds, and you do not know whether your house is your own or not, you are not going to spend much in repairs and enlargements. When you

know that heaven is yours, you are anxious to get ready for it. Full assurance finds fuel for zeal to feed upon.

This also creates and sustains patience. When we know that we have eternal life, we do not fret about the trials of this passing life. I could point to brethren here this morning, and I could mention sisters at home, who amaze me by their endurance of pain and weakness. This I know concerning them, that they never have a doubt about their interest in Christ; and for this cause they are able to surrender themselves into those dear hands which were pierced for them. They know that they are the Lord's, and so they say, "Let him do what seemeth him good." A blind child was in his father's arms, and a stranger came into the room, and took him right away from his father. Yet he did not cry or complain. His father said to him, "Johnny, are you afraid? You do not know the person who has got hold of you." "No, father," he said, "I do not know who he is, but you do." When pain gives us an awkward nip, and we do not know whether we shall live or die, when we are called to undergo a dangerous operation, and pass into unconsciousness, then we can say, "I do not know where I am, but my Father knows, and I leave all with him." Assurance makes us strong to suffer.

This, dear friends, will give you constant firmness in your confession of divine truth. You who do not know whether you are saved or not, I hope the Lord will keep you from denying the faith; but those who have a firm grip of it, these are the men who never will forsake it. A caviller in an omnibus said to a Christian man one day, "Why, you have nothing after all to rest upon. I can prove to you that your Scriptures are not authentic." The humble Christian man replied, "Sir, I am not a learned man, and I cannot answer your questions; but I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I have experienced such a change of character, and I feel such joy and peace through believing, that I wish you knew my Saviour, too." The answer he received was a very unexpected one: the unbeliever said, "You have got me there; I cannot answer *that*." Just so: we have got them there. If we know what has been wrought in us by grace, and know assuredly the sustaining power of that grace, they cannot overcome us. The full-assurance man baffles the very devil. Satan is cunning enough, but those who know and are persuaded, are birds which he cannot take in the snares of hell. When you know that your Lord is able to keep that which you have committed to him until that day, then you are firm as a rock. God make you so.

Dear brethren, this is the kind of thing that will enable you to bear a telling testimony for your Lord. It is of no use to stand up and preach things that may or may not be true. I am charged with being a dreadful dogmatist, and I am not anxious to excuse myself. When a man is not quite sure of a thing, he grows very liberal: anybody can be liberal with money which he cannot claim to be his own. The broad-school man says, "I am not sure, and I do not suppose that you are sure, for indeed nothing is sure." Does this sandy foundation suit you? I prefer rock. The things which I have spoken to you from my youth up have been such as I have tried and proved, and to me they wear an absolute certainty, confirmed by my personal

experience. I have tried these things: they have saved me, and I cannot doubt them. I am a lost man if the gospel I have preached to you be not true; and I am content to abide the issue of the day of Judgment. I do not preach doubtingly, for I do not live doubtingly. I know what I have told you to be true; why should I speak as if I were not sure? If you want to make your own testimony tell in such a day as this, you must have something to say that you are sure about; and until you are sure about it I would advise you to hold your tongue. We do not require any more questionings; the market is overstocked. We need no more doubt, honest or dishonest; the air is dark with these horrible blacks.

Brethren, if you know that you have eternal life, you are prepared to live, and equally prepared to die. How frequently do I stand at the bedside of our dying members! I am every now and then saying to myself, "I shall certainly meet with some faint-hearted one. Surely I shall come across some child of God who is dying in the dark." But I have not met with any such. Brethren, a child of God may die in the dark. One said to old Mr. Dodd, the quaint old Puritan—"How sad that our brother should have passed away in darkness! Do you doubt his safety?" "No," said old Mr. Dodd, "no more than I doubt the safety of him who said, when he was dying, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" Full assurance, as we have said before, is not of the essence of salvation. Still, I beg you to note this, that all along through these many years, in each case, when I have gone to visit any of our brethren and sisters at death, I have always found them departing in sure and certain hope of seeing the face of their Lord in glory. I have marvelled that this should be without exception, and I glory in it. Often have they said to me, "We have fed on such good food that we may well be strong in the Lord." God grant that you may have this assurance, all of you! May sinners begin to believe in Jesus, and saints believe more firmly, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—175, 738, 711.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHAT IS THE WEDDING GARMENT?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 20TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—Matthew xxii. 11—13.

Two Sabbath mornings ago I preached from this parable, and I trust many were encouraged by it; but I noticed among enquirers who came to see me afterwards, a desire to know about the wedding garment; for they feared lest, in coming to join the church, they should come like the man of whom I shall now speak. Many true hearts are extremely sensitive to the impression of fear, and they seem to be on the watch for reasons for anxiety. I do not condemn them; on the contrary, I wish there were more of such holy tremblers. It is much better to be afraid of being wrong than to be indifferent as to what you are. I perceive among the very best of the saints a considerable number who are deeply anxious as to their state before God. Those who will one day be cast out of the wedding feast are feeding themselves without fear, while those who have the most right to enjoy the banquet are full of gracious anxiety. Solomon says, "Happy is the man that feareth alway": he will cling closely to his God, and that will make him happy; he will not run risks like the presumptuous, and so he will be happy. Holy fear spreads few banquets, but it takes care that when there is a feast we go to it in a wedding garment.

My chief object this morning will be to allay the fears of gracious ones. If they understand what the wedding garment really is, they will probably discover that they are wearing it; and, if not, they will know in whose wardrobe that garment of joy is to be found, and they will gladly ask to be arrayed therein. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, give a wedding joy this morning to each wedding guest, by causing him to see for certain that he is clothed in the wedding robe.

Immediately after our text, we find these solemn words: "Many are called, but few are chosen." This is a conclusion drawn from the

whole parable, in which we see processes at work, which separate the chosen few from the many who are called. A distinction was made by the summoning of the invited guests. The simple delivery of the invitation set a difference between the loyal and the rebellious—a distinction most marked and decisive. So it is in the preaching of the gospel: we preach it to every creature within our reach. Lovingly, tenderly, earnestly; not so well as we would, but still with all our heart we call men to the royal feast of grace; and straightway the very invitation begins to gather out the precious from the vile. Pure gospel preaching is very discriminating. You can tell Cain from Abel as soon as the sacrifice is the subject. Preach salvation by grace, and you find that some will not have it at any price, others postpone all consideration of it, and a third party raise questions without end. Still do men make light of it, and go their way to their farms and to their merchandise. Thus, dear friends, every Sabbath day, without our attempting to sit in judgment on men, the gospel is in itself a refining fire. In the gospel the Son of David has a throne of judgment as well as of mercy. When men will not have Christ and his grace, the Word preached by his humble servant drives them away, and they go with the chaff. But the work of discrimination is not finished after the gospel has been heard and men have been brought into the church. Alas! even in the church division has to be made; indeed, it is there that this is most fully carried out. "His fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor." If he uses a scourge nowhere else, he will be sure to use it in his own temple. Among the sheep there are goats; among the virgins there are foolish ones; and among the guests at the wedding feast there are those who have not on the wedding garment. Until we come to heaven itself we shall always discover necessity for the work of self-examination. Even in the apostolic college, Judas carried on his knavery, as if to warn us that no rank in service, no honour among brethren, no length of experience can screen us from the necessity of saying, "Lord, is it I?" when his warning voice saith, "One of you shall betray me." In our text we see a man who has hearkened to the invitation and has come into the feast, and thus has passed the first test; and yet he is unable to abide the second; he has been received by the servants, but he cannot deceive their Master. The King detects him as a spot in the feast, and he is cast out from the palace of mercy into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. May none of us be of this sort.

I shall endeavour to answer four questions naturally arising out of the parable. First, *What is meant by the king's coming in?*—"when the king came in to see the guests"; secondly, *What is the wedding garment?* thirdly, *Who is he that hath it not;* and fourthly, *Why did he stand speechless* when he was asked, "How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?"

I. May the Holy Spirit help us while we consider, first, WHAT IS MEANT BY THE KING'S COMING IN.

"The king came in to see the guests." They were all reclining at the tables, for "the wedding was furnished with guests." They gathered while the sun was up, but darkness covered the world outside

when "the king came in to see the guests." They had feasted, and now the king came to honour the assembly.

It was the crown and the culmination of the feast. No matter how dainty the viands, nor how bright the hall, the feast has not reached its height till his majesty appears in gracious condescension. It is so with us, beloved, in reference to our greater King. When we are gathered in this house, which has often proved to us a palace of delights, we never reach the height of our desire till the Lord manifests himself to us. You delight to hear the preacher, and to join in the song, and to say Amen to the prayer, but these are not all. Your heart and your flesh cry out for God, for the living God; you look to behold the King in his beauty. When the glorious Father reveals himself in Christ Jesus, then the Sabbath is a high day, for our prayer is answered, "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant." Our glorious King is not always equally manifest in our solemn assemblies. Doubtless because of our sins he hideth himself. In truth he is always with us; for the feast is his, and the hall is his, and every guest is brought in by his grace, and every dish on the table is placed there by his love; but yet there are times when he is specially seen among his people. Then our communion with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ, is sweet indeed.

These are seasons of gracious visitation: times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. When the King comes into the assembly, the preaching of the word is in demonstration of the Spirit, and in power. Then the day of Pentecost has fully come: the Spirit is abundantly outpoured, souls are saved, saints are edified, and Christ is glorified. The spiritual soon detect the divine presence, and the shout of a King is heard in the camp. When I think of it, my heart cries out with Isaiah, "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence!" The presence of our God brings with it heavenly happiness, solemn content, and overflowing joy. Well does Dr. Watts sing:—

"The King himself comes near,
And feasts his saints to-day;
Here we may sit and see him here,
And love, and praise, and pray.

"One day amidst the place
Where my dear God hath been
Is sweeter than ten thousand days
Of pleasurable sin."

Beloved friends, you know better than I can tell you when the King is near, and you know sorrowfully when he is not in the assembly. Alas, from how many congregations is he absent, and that absence unmourned! When the Lord is gone we spread our sails, but there is no wind: we bring the sacrifice, but there is no fire. The wedding would have been a failure without guests; but what would the feast have been if the host had refused to come in and see the guests? But the King came in in due time. Ay, came in among that crowd of wayfarers gathered from the highways at a moment's notice, and his presence crowned the festival with honour and rapture.

This coming in to see the guests indicates *a glorious revelation of himself.* When the King saw the guests, the guests saw *him;* but, inasmuch as his sight of them was the more important sight of the two, the chief thing is mentioned while the minor matter is implied. Do we know what it is to see God? This is the special privilege of the pure in heart. When the Lord's way is in the sanctuary, then his sanctified ones behold him. Spiritual eyes have looked to Jesus by faith, and he saith, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Have you never been like John in Patmos, ready to swoon away because of the revelation of the Father in Christ? When Jesus has been set forth evidently crucified among us, we have in him beheld the face of the great King, and our hearts have leaped for joy, so that we have been ready to leap into heaven itself if the word had been given. When Augustine read those words, "Thou canst not see my face and live," he was bold enough to answer, "Let me die to see thy face."

Blessed vision!

"Lord, let me see thy beauteous face!
It yields a heaven below;
And angels round the throne will say,
'Tis all the heaven they know."

The King delights to see his guests, and his guests delight to see him. Then is our worship full of bliss, and no place out of heaven is so like to heaven as the place of our assemblies. We read in the Gospel of John: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord"; and well they might be. Then are we glad also when we distinctly discern him as our Lord and our God. My own soul knows this joy unspeakable, but because it is unspeakable, I say no more.

For the King to come in and see the guests includes *a manifestation of special favour.* He comes in, not to judge the guests, but to look upon them. You that were here last Thursday might will remember my text: "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name." The Lord is accustomed to look with favour upon those who love his name, for he is pleased with them. O brothers and sisters, when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; when the Father lifts upon us the light of his countenance, then our summer weather is come. Can anything be compared with the favour of God? The smiles of kings, the friendships of emperors—do not mention them in the same day. Some of you know that the Lord loves you; yea, that he loved you from before the foundation of the world, and he will love you when the world has ceased to be. Oh that the King would come here this morning in that sense, and look into all your faces, and give you all the full assurance that you are in his heart, and shall be there to all eternity! Oh that this whole church may be a living temple in which the Lord shall delight to dwell; may every stone of it be brilliant with the reflected light of his favour; may all our testimonies and labours be acceptable unto him, and may he be very gracious at the voice of our cry! O Jehovah, manifest thyself here as thou didst between the cherubim! For thy sake we have borne reproach; Lord be our glory! We have held fast thy truth; we beseech thee, let the light of thy countenance encourage us!

But here is the solemn point to which I call your attention: this visitation brings with it *a time of discovery and searching of heart.* When the King comes in to see the guests, the light grows stronger, and hidden things are revealed; for all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. When the Lord visits his church, his fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem; then the man without a wedding garment is winked at no longer. You can go on sleeping as a church when God is away, and no members will fall off; for those who know not the Lord will come in and go out among you as aforetime. The dead will remain quiet till the Lord sounds the trumpet of resurrection: mere professors will not know that they are making a false profession, but will remain at ease in our solemn feasts. But when the King comes in all things are changed. "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope." You cannot receive abundant spiritual life into the church without the discernment of the unworthy, and the explusion of the spiritually dead. One goes away because he is offended at the doctrine, another is grieved at the heart-searching experience, and a third feels himself too sternly rebuked as to his life. Thus the Lord's visitation of grace becomes an assize of judgment, and the finger of the Lord writes upon the wall, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." If the Lord our God were to come into his church to-day there would be an awful shrinkage among the number of his guests; a panic would seize the assembly, and the door would be blocked with men hastening to escape his eye.

Look how the king's discernment is recorded in the text. One man only had refused to put on a wedding garment; but the king at once fixed his eye upon him. The Saviour, by a kind of heavenly charity, mentions only one intruder, but I fear we must regard the one as the type of many. If the King should come in at the time of our communion, I am afraid he would detect more than one. Still, if there were but one, he would concentrate his gaze upon that one, and speak to him by himself. If you are the only person who has dared to enter the church knowing that you are not converted, the King will spy you out. If you make a profession of religion out of bravado, and keep it up by sheer deceit, you may hide yourself away among your family connections, or think that your respectability will screen you; but you are mistaken. You have to deal with one whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and he will so unmask you that you will not have a word to say in your own defence. This is a solemn matter. It will not make the true-hearted wish the King to stay away, but those who are wilful deceivers may well tremble. The King does come to this church. He is specially present in the midst of this people, and the consequence is that his judgment is strict with us. I have seen the rod of his discipline here in a very striking manner. I have seen the fair professor wither in the heat of love, and the rootless Christian dried up in the noontide of grace. He might have gone on very well in any other church, but he has not been able to abide the brandished sword of the Spirit, and its dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

He has not been able to sit it out, but has been obliged to go away and find an easier rest. Just in proportion as we really have the King in the midst of us making glad the saints, we shall have the King in the midst of us discerning the false and casting them out, first into the outer darkness of the world, which lieth in the wicked one, and at last into the outer darkness of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Still, be the result what it may, our prayer this morning is, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us."

II. Now I would answer the second question: WHAT IS THE WEDDING GARMENT? You are probably aware that this has been a point greatly disputed among theologians. Is the wedding garment justification, or sanctification, or what? I am not going to be theological and bring doctrinal matters to the text; but I shall read the parable as it stands, and interpret its details by its general run. It is called a "*wedding* garment"—a garment suitable for a marriage feast. Let us translate the figure, rather than attempt to rivet a doctrine to it. What does a wedding garment mean? What is that which we must have in connection with our Lord's marriage or be cast out for ever?

I think I may say plainly that it must signify *a distinguishing mark of grace.* Everybody does not wear a wedding garment: he who wears it has put it on because he is a wedding guest. You know the wedding guest at once by his attire. He dresses in a way which would be considered singular if he were so arrayed every day. Your steady citizen indulges in a white waistcoat on the nuptial occasion, but he never dreams of going down to his office in the city in such gear. True members of the church of God wear a distinguishing mark. If you are not different from other people, you have no right in the church of God. If a servant can live with you for years and never discover your love to God, I should think there is none to discover. If you are just the same as those you lived with in your former days, if you have undergone no change, and are like the rest of men, you have not the distinguishing mark which sets forth your right to be in the church of God. There ought to be a something about us which sets us apart—a something which can be seen and understood by common people, even as a wedding garment could be seen, and its meaning at once perceived. Your religion must not require a microscope to perceive it, nor should it be so indistinct that few can discover any meaning in it. It should be as visible as the white garment which was worn by Easterns at a marriage. Is it so?

I may boldly add here that the wedding garment was a distinguishing mark of grace; for as these people were fetched in from the highways they could not have provided themselves with wedding garments. It is the custom in the East for a king to provide robes for his guests; therefore this wedding garment was a mark of grace, freely given and received. Is there, then, a something about you which the Lord in love has given you? Do you differ from others, not in natural attainments, but in spiritual grace? Does the difference mainly lie in what God himself has done for you? That is the question involved in the symbol of the wedding garment. Do you differ from what you

used to be. Do you differ from what you were years ago? Do you differ from those with whom you used to associate, so that you seek other company and turn aside from those who once were charming fellows to you? If so, you have on the wedding garment. It is a distinguishing mark. I do not mean to put this in a way that would grieve anybody here unless they ought to be grieved; but if they ought to be grieved, then we would have them cry to God for renewal by his grace. May the Lord make you to wear his livery! May he give you the spot of his children, and cause you no longer to be of the world! A distinguishing mark is plainly the first meaning of the wedding garment.

In the next place, it was *a symbol of respect for the king*. To be fit for his company, the dress must be special. The absence of such a dress was, in the case before us, the badge of irreverence and disloyalty. This man said to himself: "I will feed at the feast without acknowledging its intent. Whoever stops me, I will push my way in, and I shall sit there in my everyday garments, to let the king know that I do not respect him in the least, and will not wear the robes he provides." It is as if you had lost a son, and some wretched man should say, "I will attend the funeral in a wedding suit. I shall thus wound the feelings of the mourners, and show my contempt for the whole affair." What an insult it would be! To turn the picture. Suppose you were being married, and somebody forced his way into the wedding dressed in mourning, with crape upon his hat, and black kid gloves upon his hands. What a wanton insult! If such impudence were met with a horse-whip, who would be surprised? Now, this man acted in that fashion: he had no respect for the king: he showed his traitorous nature in the worst possible manner, spiting the king in his own halls upon a tender occasion. Dear friends, I trust that you can truly say, "I have on the wedding garment of reverence for the King. I do not despise the Lord God; but I bow before him in true worship. I would come into his church, not to dishonour him, but to give glory to his name." The wedding garment was a token of respect to him who had provided the feast and presided over it: judge you this day whether you have on the wedding garment, by enquiring whether you honour and reverence the Lord God, and labour to be obedient to him in all things.

The wedding garment was, moreover, *a token of honour for the Prince*. Those who put on the wedding garment did as good as say, "We join in the joy of the Prince, and come hither to-day to show our attachment to him, and to wish him joy of his bride." My hearers, do you feel a love to the Lord Jesus Christ? Many do not. I grieve to say we have a race of men sprung up nowadays who call themselves Christians, who pour contempt upon his precious blood, and ridicule the substitutionary sacrifice. Dreadful assertion! but it is a matter of fact. The name of Jesus, why, it is to our lives what the sun is to the skies, what the rivers are to the plains. Nothing makes us so glad as thoughts of Jesus. I am sure when I hear a sermon about Christ, my Master, my very heart grows warm within me. Is it so with you? Well, then, you have on the wedding garment; that is to say, you do truly, though it be but in a simple way, pay homage to the

Prince of Peace; you love the name and person of Jesus, and you come into his church because you do so.

The wedding garment also signified *a confession of sympathy with the great occasion.* Every man who ate of the fatlings, every man who drank of the wines, every man who gave his presence, was a helper in the honours of that wedding feast, save only this one intruder, who would not even pretend to join in the joy, for he refused the simple act of putting on a robe fit for the feast. Dear friend, do you feel sympathy with the Lord's purposes of grace? Do you rejoice that Jesus finds a bride among our race? Do you bless God for the covenant of grace, which includes incarnation, redemption, and sanctification? Do you bless the name of the incarnate God for taking into everlasting union with himself a people prepared of the Lord? Well, then, you are in sympathy with the marriage of the Lamb, and you have a right to be present at the feast. You evidently wear the wedding garment which denotes your joy in Christ, your interest in his Church, your part and lot in the joyous work of his salvation.

The wedding garment means, in a word, *conformity to the requirements of the occasion.* It was a wedding, and the guests must put on a suitable dress. This man refused to put it on. He was proud, and would not wear the gift of grace; he was self-willed, and must needs be singular, and show his independence of mind. The regulation was by no means irksome, and to the rest of the guests the commandment was not grievous; but this man would have his own way in defiance of the Lord of the feast. What could come of such folly? Now, beloved, one of the requirements of the feast is, that you with your heart believe on the Lord Jesus, and that you take his righteousness to be your righteousness. Do you refuse this? If you will not accept the Lord Jesus as your substitute, bearing your sins in his own body on the tree, you have not the wedding garment. Another requirement is that you should repent of sin and forsake it; and that you should follow after holiness, and endeavour to copy the example of the Lord Jesus. You are to possess, as the work of divine grace, a godly and upright character. Have you such a character? Even though you are not perfect, yet, inasmuch as you follow after righteousness, you have the wedding garment. You say that you are a Christian; do you live like a Christian? Are you in a position and condition which agree with the gospel feast? If so, you have on the wedding garment.

Those who came unto the feast were, when they came, both bad and good; so that the wedding garment does not relate to their past character, but relates to something with which they were invested when they came to the banquet. The putting on of a wedding robe cannot refer to an elaborate ceremony, or a feat of the intellect, or to a deep experience of the heart; and yet it involved joining in the wedding, or not joining in it. It involved reverence for the King, and homage to the Prince, and sympathy with the whole matter. Look well to yourselves, and see whether you truly yield yourselves to the Lord, and agree with him in the whole matter.

III. Thirdly, WHO IS THE MAN THAT HAS NOT ON THE WEDDING GARMENT?

I should say, first, *he is the man who rejects God's revealed gospel that he may follow his own thought and his own wisdom.* He says that he is loyal to Christ, and he expects all his fellow guests to be firm friends with him, for is he not in the banquet as much as they are? But he does not mean by loyalty what they mean by it. He is among believers, but he is not truly of them. He talks about atonement; he does not mean substitution. He talks about the divinity of Christ; he does not mean the Godhead of Christ. He talks about justification by faith; but he does not mean the old-fashioned doctrine. He speaks of regeneration, but means evolution. He girds himself with the garment of philosophy, but he refuses the robe of revelation, for the cut of it is too old-fashioned for him. He is no more a wedding guest than he is a merry-andrew; perhaps, not so much so. He wears raiment in which the robe of righteousness and the garments of gladness are not to be seen. The looms of free grace and dying love have never woven him a wedding dress. His robe is not of God's provision; it is from his own wardrobe. He glories in his own culture, and not in the revelation of God, nor yet in the work of divine grace upon the heart. He is in the church, but he is not in Christ. He has a name to live, but he is dead.

The next person who has not on the wedding garment is *the man who refuses the righteousness of God* because he has a righteousness of his own. He thinks his work-day dress good enough for Christ's own wedding. What does he want with imputed righteousness? He scouts it as immoral. He who is himself immoral! What does he want with the precious blood of Jesus? He does not need to be washed from crimson stains. He writes a paper against the sensuousness of those persons who sing—

> "There is a fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

His own righteousness, though it be of the law, and such as Paul rejected, he esteems so highly that he counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing! Ah me, the insolence of self-righteousness! Its pride is the very chief of sins, for it slights the righteousness of God. Practically, the self-righteous man does not see any wedding in the gospel system; he does not see anything in the gospel to make him glad, nothing for him to sing about, nothing to make him shout for joy of heart. He will not praise the Prince. Not he! He is under the law, and he is content to be a slave; he is trying to save himself by his own works, and law knows no holidays. He is not a wedding guest, but a mere drudge.

Another sort of person *has profession without feeling.* If he were outside of the church his conscience might trouble him: he has come inside of it, and now he says to himself, "It is all right." He does not care to watch his feelings; he never had any: he would rather not have any. To the power of the Word he is a stranger, though he knows the letter of it. As to repentance, and the burden of sin, he never knew them, and does not want to know them. He thinks Mr. Bunyan must have been superstitious or morbid when he wrote "Grace Abounding." Joy in the Lord is equally a thing unknown

to him, for he hates all excitement. He has no solemn depressions and no raptures, for he has no spiritual life. As he has no holy feeling, so he has no holy action: he is a Christian, he says; but having put up the sign-board, he drives no trade. His religion operates far more upon his boots and his hat than it does upon his heart: that is to say he comes out respectably dressed on a Sunday, but his religion never affects his conduct. Nobody can find much fault with him except that he is as dead as a door nail. He commits no gross sin, he certainly performs no brilliant deeds of piety. Spiritually he is a very well washed corpse—that is all.

We have others who are in the church, who *think that what they have done themselves, or what nature has done for them, is quite enough.* They do not seek anything supernatural. They do not want any wedding garment more than their every-day coats. They are quite reputable in appearance even now, and with a little touching up they will be good enough without the new birth, and without the Holy Spirit. Alas, my hearers! all that nature can ever do for you will leave you on the wrong side of heaven. You may cultivate nature to its utmost, it will never bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. "Ye must be born again." If you have not come into living contact with a living Saviour by the work of the Holy Ghost you may be in the Church, but you are not in Christ, and have not on the wedding garment.

Why, some dare to come into the church who *have not even common morality.* It is shocking we should have to say it, but nowadays, we meet with those who call themselves Christians who can drink upon the sly, who can commit uncleanness with their bodies, who can be dishonest in their trading, who can be liars, who can hate their own flesh and blood and be at enmity with their brethren, and yet dare to come to the communion table. In the highlands of Scotland it was at one time difficult to get Christian people to come to the Lord's Table, for they so trembled under a sense of their unworthiness. We do not want to push this too far, but that is a great deal better than that unholy daring, which is to be found in the minds of so many who serve Christ and Belial. God save his church from degradation! Unholy professors have not on a wedding garment: their outward robes by no means befit the King's feast; but they are a dishonour to him.

I do not see how that man can be said to have on a wedding garment *who takes no interest in the work of the church.* You see when a man put on the wedding garment, he did as good as say, "I am interested in the wedding. I wish God's blessing to the bride and bridegroom." But many come in now to the King's feast who do not care a snap of the finger for the church of God, nor for Christ either. They come in because a sort of selfishness makes them anxious to be saved; but as to the bride, the Lamb's wife, they do not care whether she starves or flourishes. Sad and wretched business this! If members of the church only can distribute tracts or attend meetings for prayer—if they are doing this, and show an interest thus in the wedding —they have on the wedding garment. But if all they do is simply to hear, either to criticize or to enjoy, but never work for Christ, nor pray for Christ, they have no sympathy in the wedding feast, and therefore they have not on a wedding garment.

IV. To close, WHY WAS THIS MAN SPEECHLESS? We do not often meet with people who have no excuse. Excuse-making is the easiest trade out. A man can make an excuse out of nothing at all, or out of what is less than nothing, out of a direct lie. But here was a man who could not speak? Why was that?

Well, I think, first, *the affront was too bare-faced.* "How camest thou in hither?" If he did not like the king he could have kept outside. There was no need why he should come in at all, and there display his malice. If any of you are resolved to be lost, you need not add to your eternal ruin by making a profession of religion, for hypocrisy is a superfluity of naughtiness. But this man wilfully refused the wedding garment. Now those dear souls I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon do not wilfully refuse the Lord's grace: I am sure they do not. Oh no, they are afraid they are not right, but they do not wish to be wrong. Such are not among those whom this parable condemns.

Next, *the affront was so audacious.* "How camest thou in hither?" said the King. He must have pushed by the deacons at the door. The fellow would come in. When the king said, "Bind him hand and foot," I think it was because he had used hand and foot to get in. He would get in; he said, "I will get in. I will defy the king to his face, and sit in among his guests without a wedding garment." You, dear friend, do not wish to do that: I am sure it is the last thing you would do. Why, we have to persuade you to come in at all; for you are so tenderly jealous lest you should be mistaken Do not let this parable condemn you.

But why was the man speechless? I answer once more, *because it was the king himself who spoke to him.* Ah! if I speak to you, what am I but flesh and blood? You do not mind me! But if the King himself were here to-day, and he said to any one of you, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" the tone of his voice, the glory of his presence, would flash in upon your hearts, you would be obliged to feel it, and you could not invent an answer. If you do not love him, if you have no reverence for him, no sympathy with his Son, you will be speechless before his bar.

Lastly, the reason why he was speechless was because, even if he could have spoken and been free from terror, *there was nothing to be said.* He could not cry, "Lord, I did not know it." He saw all the rest with wedding garments on. He could not say, "Lord, I could not get a wedding garment": each one had received a garment gratis, and he might have received the same. He could not say, "Lord, I was pushed in here by somebody else." No, he had willingly chosen to come, and to defy the rule. The guests had all looked at him: some had edged a little way off from him. Some had tenderly said, "Brother, will you not put on the wedding garment?" He answered, "No." "Will you not go out before the king comes in?" "Why," he said, "I came on purpose to defy him. I mean to keep my place." I do not wonder that the king said, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Our Lord Jesus Christ says very strong things about the future of the wicked. I have been accused of representing

the state of the lost in too horrible a manner. I have never gone beyond the dreadful descriptions given by our Lord himself. Do not risk your eternal future. Come to the church of God and join it, but do not join it unless you love the Lord. Do not come to the gospel feast unless you reverence the King; unless you love the Prince; unless you are in sympathy with the great work of grace which is pictured as a wedding feast. If you have sympathy with the wedding, love to the Bridegroom, and delight in the bride, then come and welcome; for you have the wedding garment. I am thinking just now of all those other hundreds of people at the wedding, all of them clothed with the wedding garment. What joy they felt! Many had been bad, and all had been poor: but they all had the wedding garment, and not one of them was cast out. If you will but put your trust in Jesus, and so honour the Son; and rest in the love of the Father, and so honour the King, it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." God bless you for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxxi., cxxii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—122 (Song I.), 721, 873.

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THE TENDER ENQUIRY OF A FRIEND.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"How long wilt thou cut thyself?"—Jeremiah xlvii. 5.

TRAVELLERS in the East tell us that among the most melancholy scenes they witness is the following:—Men inflict upon themselves very grievous, voluntary wounds, and then exhibit themselves in public. They even disfigure themselves with gashes and cuts in the presence of excited throngs. I am speaking of what has occurred even within the last few years among the Moslems. When some great prophet or emir is coming that way, a certain number of fanatical Mahometans take swords, spears, and other sharp instruments, and gash themselves terribly therewith, cutting their breasts, their faces, their heads, and all parts of their bodies. Frequently they have taken care to dress themselves in white sheets, in order that, as the blood flows copiously from their bodies, it may be the more clearly seen, that they may become the more ghastly spectacles of misery, or the more fully display the religious excitement under which they labour. As everything in the East remains for ever the same, this Moslem superstition carries us back to the olden times whereof we read in the Old Testament, when the priests of Baal, having cried in vain to their idol, cut themselves with lances and with knives. Our translators were probably afraid to write the harsher words, and so they translated the passage "knives and lances," but they might have written swords and spears—sharp instruments of a desperate character. Thus they displayed their inward zeal, and thus, perhaps, they hoped to move the pity of their god. Eastern fanaticism surpasses belief: you would suppose that the raving creatures were about to commit suicide, and yet there is a method in their madness. You could hardly think that men possessed of reason would torture themselves and disfigure themselves as they do; but they know what they are at, and are only carrying out their programme. The Lord expressly forbade his people, the Jews, to perpetrate such folly. They were not even to shave the corners of their beards, or to hack their hair, as the Orientals do in the hour of their grief; and then they were further prohibited from injuring their bodies by the command, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print

any marks upon you: I am the Lord." (Leviticus xix. 28.) Men in Eastern lands, not only in connection with fanaticism, but in reference to domestic affairs, will cut themselves to express their grief and anguish, or to make other people believe that they are feeling such grief and anguish. We may congratulate ourselves that we are free from at least one foolish custom.

The prophet here speaks to the Philistines who were about to endure the tremendous judgments of God, and, indeed, to be crushed out as a nation by the Egyptians and the Chaldeans; and he says to Philistia, "How long wilt thou cut thyself?" Gaza was to be made bald by the smiting of Pharaoh; Ashkelon was to be shorn away; and the whole nation was to feel the sword of the Lord, which would not rest in its scabbard. How long would they continue to bring upon themselves such terrible judgments?

The expression is used, first, *almost in despair*. The question is asked with little hope: as if the self-torturer would never have done, but would go on to mutilate himself without end. I intend to use it at this time, in the second place, *as a question asked instructively and hopefully*, in the hope that some, who have practically been cutting themselves, will cease from this self-torture, and find rest and peace where it is to be had, and to be had at once and for ever. May the good Spirit grant our desire!

I. First, dear friends, I SHALL ASK THIS QUESTION VERY DESPAIRINGLY—"How long wilt thou cut thyself?"—for many are cutting themselves very terribly, and will have to feel the wounds thereof for a long, long time, neither can we induce them to cease therefrom.

I allude, first, to some professors of religion who have been church-members for ten, twenty, or more years, and yet *have practically done nothing at all for the Saviour*. If they were really to awaken to a sense of their neglect, I do not know how long they would be in anguish, or how deep would be their distress; for if Titus mourned that he had lost a day when he had done no good action for twenty-four hours, and he but a heathen, what would happen to a Christian if he were really to see his responsibility before God, and to feel that he has not only lost a day but a year—perhaps many years? Have not some of you well-nigh lost a whole lifetime? What hosts of opportunities you have thrown away! What multiplied responsibilities you have incurred! Favoured as you have been, and so ungrateful! Comforted as you have been, and yet keeping the comfort to yourself, and never seeking out other lonely hearts to share with them the heavenly balm! Instructed as you have been, and yet instructing none in return! With light divine shining upon you, and yet never giving that light to others!

> "Can we, whose souls are lighted
> With wisdom from on high,
> Can we, to men benighted,
> The lamp of life deny?"

The good Bishop's hymn asks the question as if it were impossible. But, no, sirs, it is not impossible. It is sadly true; and alas, commonly true! Our churches are made up largely of barren members, and of cumber-ground trees that bring forth no fruit. Oh, if I am

addressing such—and honestly in the sight of God I fear I am—then how long will you chasten yourselves for your neglect? It must be long before you can forgive yourselves for such wicked indolence. How long will you afflict yourselves to think that you should have suffered time which you can never recall, and opportunities which you will never enjoy again, to go by you wasted? The miller puts his wheel hard by the stream, and uses its constant flow to grind his corn; but you have a stream of opportunity and power flowing by you, which you have turned to no practical service. Your tears might well be as plentiful as the drops of the wasted stream of life. Some of you stand by, and listen to the hum of the wheel, and admire the liquid music of the falling waters; but nothing practical comes of it. Your taste is gratified, and your conscience is eased by attending religious services, but there is nothing done for Christ—nothing done for the souls of men. Like little children with their toy windmills, you are amused with that which, if you were true men, you would turn to good account. Are you not ashamed to have been playing, while God and heaven, and even Satan and hell, are all so terribly in earnest? You have come to years of discretion, when "life is real, life is earnest," and you have still trifled. Can you ever be sorry enough for this? How long wilt thou cut thyself?

Ah, me! I think I should eternally regret it if up till now I had never preached the gospel of the grace of God. Ah, me! If it had not been God's good pleasure to let me break out as a soul-winner while yet a boy, I could lay me down upon my bed, and wish that I had never been born. If I had reached the very centre of life, and yet had done nothing to reclaim and restore the sons of men, and glorify the Lord my Redeemer, I should tear my hair. Do I address any who have come to the noon of life, and have not yet done a hand's turn in my Lord's vineyard? The dew of the morning is gone, and the best hours of the day have glided away: why stand ye here all the day idle? Do I make you feel uncomfortable? I shall thank God if I do; and I shall be happy, indeed, if, instead of cutting yourselves with vain regrets, you lacerate yourselves with my sharp remarks as with spears and knives, and then gird up your loins, and say, "God helping me, there shall never be another wasted year, nay, nor another wasted day!" Then I shall be rejoiced indeed. Oh, how I wish each one of you would pray—

> "Let every flying hour confess
> I bring thy gospel fresh renown,
> And when my life and labours cease
> May I possess the promised crown"!

But, lazy professors, when will you have done with your regretting if your conscience is once aroused? If you are once moved to see what cause you have for shame, surely you will never leave off cutting yourselves with regrets? And yet, what will be the use of your lamentations unless they lead you to amendments, and from sluggards you become labourers? Let us hope it will be so; but I am not very sanguine, for it is hard to make long habits of indolence yield to diligence.

The same may be applied, and applied very solemnly, too, *to those who backslide*—who, in addition to being useless, are injurious, because

their example tends to hinder others from coming to Christ. Oh, if any of you that name the name of Jesus, and have been happy in his service, and have enjoyed high days and holy days in his presence, turn aside, I shall use this lamentation over you! You will do yourselves terrible injury, and I shall shudder as I see the edged tools of sin in your reckless hands. Every sin is a gash in the soul. The Lord will bring you back and save you, as I believe; but oh, how long will you cut yourselves? You will feel in after life how grievously you have injured your souls. David's great sin was put away so that he did not die, but he was never the same David as before. The Lord's people seem to have shunned him for a time while the adversary found occasion to blaspheme. He offers a remarkable prayer in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm when he says, "Let those that fear thee turn unto me." I think they had, in a measure, turned away from him in horror at his great sin. They began to stand in doubt of him. They had loved him as their champion in his earlier days, when he led the van of the armies of the Lord of hosts, and when as a youth he returned from the battle bringing the head of Goliath. They had looked up to him when he was in the wilderness because of his integrity. Though hunted like a partridge by the ungodly party, yet he was the hope of Israel, and the joy of all the saints. With what delight did they gather round him at Hebron and Jerusalem when he was crowned their king! They felt that God had blest his people in giving them such a leader. But when it was whispered that he had defiled his neighbour's wife, then the godly shuddered. They knew what blasphemy and rebuke would come of it, and they kept out of his way. They must have been deeply grateful when they found him truly penitent. When he was crying to God for mercy, probably some of them would know it, and perhaps step in to cheer him. But still David was scarcely David again, either to the people of God or to himself. The Lord out of very love to him chastened him sorely, and pursued him with plague upon plague. His family became his dishonour and his sorrow. He went with broken bones to the grave—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. How grievously he had injured himself! How long he had to cut himself with anguish for that one sin? His life, surely, from the time when he fell with Bath-sheba was penitential sorrow rather than confident delight; and though the Lord left him not, but brought him to much maturity of grace out of his brokenness of heart, yet, still, as often as he went to his couch, the memory of his great transgression would cut and wound his heart.

What is true of David applies also to others who have in any great measure turned aside. Solomon, in a high degree, hurt himself by his terrible follies. In the New Testament, Peter is a conspicuous example. It is a tradition that whenever Peter heard the cock crow he used to weep; and I do not wonder at it. Alas! if you and I should ever be suffered to fall into grievous sin, it may be all done in ten minutes, but it cannot be got rid of in fifty years. We shall bear the scars of that ten minutes' sin until the Lord shall take us home, and permit us to wake up "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," in the full likeness of our perfect Lord. Oh, my brethren, watch anxiously lest you have to mourn for years over the sin of an instant!

God grant that all his servants may be kept both from the sin of omission, of which I spoke at first, which leads to neglect of duty, and also from the sin of commission, which leads to actual backsliding and practical departing from the living God.

There is one thing which comes after these, and comes in connection with them. If you and I should *know that souls have been lost*—lost as far as we are concerned—*through our neglect*, how long shall we cut ourselves on that account? A dear soul said to me yesterday, "My husband died. He had been a sad drunkard, but in his last illness, through the blessing of God upon those who visited him, I trust he found peace. He said that he believed in the Lord Jesus, and there is my comfort. But oh, if he had died without finding Christ, I should have been indeed a widow! I know not what could have comforted me." I am grateful that our sister called in her Christian friends, and that, by their efforts and her prayers, she was spared the keenest edge of sorrow. "Surely the bitterness of death is past." But suppose *you* were to lose your son, and that your son should die in sin which he learned of you; or in sin which you saw in him and never rebuked! Suppose, I say, your son should die in his iniquity. What if he should have been your favourite child, and you should have tolerated much evil in him which you would not have suffered in another! What if you pampered and indulged him, and gave him liberty to make himself vile! Shall I tell you how you will behave yourself when the news comes to you that he is dead? You will get by yourself alone, and cry like David, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" You can lay your children down upon the bed all stark and cold, and follow them to the tomb, and even sing as you commit their mortal remains to the grave, when you know that they die in hope; but if they perish in their sin, guilty, red-handed, unforgiven, what will you say to yourselves? Fathers, if you have never sought to bring your children to repentance, how will you excuse yourselves? If you have never prayed with them, or wept with them—if you have never even instructed them in the things of God, what flattering unction will you lay to your guilty consciences? What will you say, mother, if your daughter passes into eternity unforgiven, and you have never tried to lead her to Jesus? What shall I say of you, my congregation, if I waste your Sabbaths with fine shows of oratory but do not seek your souls? When next the knell is heard, and there is another gone who constantly listened to my voice, if I have not been faithful with you, and persuaded you to lay hold on Christ, how long must I tear my hair, and cut myself for very anguish, because my skirts will be spotted crimson with your blood?

These are solemn things, but there is deep truth in them, and they ought to be considered by all of you who profess to be Christians. I knew one who used to have a man calling upon him in the way of business, and bringing certain articles which he bought across the counter. This tradesman said one day to himself, "I have dealt with that man for nine or ten years, and we have scarcely passed the time of day. He has brought in his work, and I have paid him across the counter, but I have never tried to do him any good. Surely this cannot be right. Providence has put him in my way, and I ought at least to have asked

him whether he is saved in Christ." Well, the next time the man came, our good brother's spirit failed him, and he did not like to begin a religious conversation. The man never came again, but a boy brought in the next lot of goods. "How is this?" said the shopkeeper. "Father is dead," said the boy. My friend, the shopkeeper, said to me, "I could never forgive myself. I could not stay in the shop that day. I felt that I was guilty of that man's blood; but I had not thought of it before. How can I ever clear myself from the guilty fact that, when I did think of it, my ungracious timidity prevented me from opening my mouth?" My own dear friends and comrades, do not bring upon yourselves such cutting regrets! Avoid them by daily watching to save men from the second death. Will you let them die? Will you let them die? If so, when you wake up to the sense that you have suffered them to perish, then this dreadful question may well be put to you, "How long wilt thou cut thyself?" How long will you feel remorse and regret that your hopeful opportunity was allowed to pass by unimproved?

One other most solemn use may be made of this question: God grant that it may never be so, but if *any one of you should die in his sins*, how long will you regret it, think you? It looks dreadfully possible that some of you will perish for ever, since you have so often been entreated to come to Christ, and have never come. For the moment, suppose that there is no hell, but if you are only shut out of heaven, how long will that be a subject of grief? If you should only hear the King say, "Depart, ye cursed!" and should only have to depart, and keep on departing, oh, the wringing of hands, and the anguish! O thou who hast lost eternal life, how long wilt thou cut thyself? If thou shouldst miss Christ, and miss mercy, and miss heaven, and miss eternal glory, if there were naught else, how long wilt thou bemoan thyself? With what depth of anguish wilt thou smart to have lost all this—to have, in fact, lost all which makes up life, and joy! What if, after all, I come short of the kingdom, I that had my Sabbaths, but never found rest in Christ! I that heard the gospel, but never took Christ to be my Saviour! I that was almost persuaded, and yet never yielded my heart to divine grace! I that was almost in the ark, and yet, not being altogether in it, was left to drown! I that had so much about me that was hopeful! I that would, as I said, in a short time, concern myself about divine things: I—I am cast out, left with the tares, not gathered with the wheat. What if I find myself on the left hand, condemned, and cast away! What regrets will such a calamity cost me if it be so! O souls, how long—how long will you grieve and mourn when it shall come to this? According to my reading of that Book—and I would gladly read it otherwise if I did not feel that truth and honesty forbid me to do so—your loss, your anguish will be for ever. For ever you will cut yourselves. For ever will you lament that, when the opportunity was so near you, you put it away from you, and when Christ was ready to receive you, you would not be received, but chose your own delusions, and committed eternal suicide. O friends, do not trifle with that which is and must be eternal! Make not a dreadful choice which can never be altered. Be solemn, be intense when you are dealing with matters which for good or bad will be past changing when death comes to you.

II. There I leave this very painful use of the text, to try and use it at greater length in a happier sort, by way of consolation and hopeful comfort, to those who will, we trust, be soon brought to receive the Lord Jesus.

"How long wilt thou cut thyself?" I SHALL ASK THIS QUESTION HOPEFULLY, trusting that in many their sorrow is nearing its end.

This text may be very profitably and prudently applied *to those who have been bereaved*, and who, being bereaved, sorrow, and sorrow to excess. I hope that I am not about to say a harsh word; but I would deal faithfully with rebellious repining. "Jesus wept"; and he that does not weep when he loses a dear one must be something less than a man, and unworthy to be called a Christian. But there is such a thing as carrying to an extreme our sorrow for those we lose, till it becomes rebellion against God. You remember the Quaker saying to the lady who was wearing very deep double mourning years after one of her children had died, "Madam, hast thou not forgiven God yet?" And there is a truth about that remark; some do not forgive God for what he has done. Their sorrow amounts to this—that they have a quarrel with God over his dispensations. "How can he be good and have taken away my mother?" said one to me. "How can God be good and have taken away my child?" cried another. There is a want of faith, a want of reverence, a want of love, a want of many sweet and placid graces, in such mourning as that; and, without dwelling long upon it, I beg to put that question to any mourner here who is mourning with the ungodly sorrowing of the heathen—as if there were no hope. "How long wilt thou cut thyself?" Is not thy child in Jesus' bosom? Has not thy friend gone among the angels, to join the sweet singers of God? Is it not a gain to the departed, though it be a loss to thee, that they are translated to the place of everlasting bliss? Wouldst thou have them back again? Darest thou wish such a thing even for a moment? If they be supremely blest, is there no blessedness to thee in their blessedness? Art thou so selfish that thou wouldst tear a star from heaven that thou mightest have the light of it all to thyself? Come, be reconciled, not only to thy grief, but to thy God, who sent it! It has come to be now like a fretting canker within thee; wilt thou not end it? As the moth eats the garment, so doth this grief eat thee up. Wherefore, arise and shake thyself from it. Knowest thou not that their Redeemer liveth, and thy Redeemer too? And wilt thou not now yield up to Christ what is infinitely more his than thine, and cheerfully say, "Let him have those whom he has purchased with his blood, and for whom he prayed, 'Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am'"? "How long wilt thou cut thyself?" Put away thy disputing and murmuring, and either, like Aaron, hold thy peace, or better still, like Job, bless the name of the Lord, and rejoice in thy God.

But now, turning to quite another character, I would use the same expression for another purpose. There are some *persons with whom God is dealing in great love, and yet they are very rebellious.* They persevere in known sin, although the evil way has become exceedingly hard to them. They seem as if they would walk over red-hot ploughshares to hell. I have known some who have found the pleasures which

once delighted them to become a nuisance, a trouble, a pain, a disgust, and a weariness; and yet they continue in their unprofitable course. You remember Saul of Tarsus, to whom the Lord said, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks": he was acting as though with a naked foot he kicked against iron nails, or like the bullock when it is struck with the ox-goad, and kicks back, driving the goad much deeper into itself than otherwise it would have gone. Certain men are doing just *that:* how I wish they could see that it is so! They are following a wild course of life, and they are losing money at it, and they are likely to lose much more. They are plunging down. What are they thinking of? "How long wilt thou cut thyself?" Already they have met with great disasters and misfortunes: they will meet with many more. When the dogs are out hunting, they run in packs. The plagues of Egypt are ten at least, and every one who plays the Pharaoh may expect the full number.

O thou to whom the Lord is sternly kind, by terrible things in righteousness he will chasten thee to thy right mind! If the Lord means to have you at his feet, he will bring you there. By hook or by crook he will bring you there, depend upon it; and if you will not come by gentle means, you shall come by some other means; but he will break you down in due time. I know that already certain of you have had stroke upon stroke. From wealth you have descended to poverty, from health you have come down to sickness, from honour you have fallen to obscurity. Is not this enough to humble you before God? You will come down lower yet. As surely as you live, you will be made to feel that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God. My heart's desire is that it may be so, that by this painful method you may be saved. I spoke some time ago with the son of a very godly man. He seemed to be an infidel outright, and had taken to horse-racing, and the like. My inmost soul was grieved concerning him: I could have wept. As he talked very largely, and mild words were lost on him, I said to him, "Keep as many race-horses as you can, and go in for gambling most heartily, for thus the sooner you will lose all your money. Some prodigals never come back to the Father's house until they sink as low as the pig's trough, and that is probably the way for you. When you get a hungry belly, I trust you will come home." He knows what my warning meant, but I fear he intends to make it true. The way of transgressors is hard; and it is a mercy when it becomes so hard that they are resolved to quit it for another and a better way. Is this happening to anybody here? Have you spent your money riotously? Are you getting into trouble? I half congratulate you. I congratulate the angels who watch your course: I hope that the probabilities are that you will soon say, "How many hired servants of my Father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my Father." But do not make the process too long, I charge you. "How long wilt thou cut thyself?" Have you not had enough of the consequences of your folly? Will you not turn at the Lord's rebuke? Will you not yield under the strokes you have already felt? "Turn ye; turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Why should you be stricken any more? Have you not played the fool long enough? "How long wilt thou cut thyself?"

I might use this expression even to *the Jewish nation itself.* Ah, God, through what seas of trouble have they had to swim since the day when they said, "His blood be on us, and on our children"! Alas, the story of Israel is enough to make one's blood turn to ice within his veins! And will they not come back? Will they not come back? Must they be hunted in Germany, and hounded in Russia? Shame on the countries that dare do such things! But must it be so? God grant that they may no longer provoke their Holy One to indignation against them! How long will they cut themselves? For still these great evils happen to them according to the eternal counsels of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because of their unbelief. When they turn to the Messiah, their glory shall return also, and the crown wherewith God crowned his people shall again be set upon their head, and their ancient city shall again be "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." Assuredly the Lord gave the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed for ever; how long will they shut themselves out of it?

But, now, all this has rather kept me from my main design, which is to speak to those dear friends of ours who are *afflicting their souls with needless fears.* No good can possibly come by a continuance in their unhappy moods: they are cutting themselves quite needlessly. They might at once have peace, and rest, and joy if they were willing to accept the Lord's gracious way of salvation. You who are burdened with sin, and are trying to get rid of it, but will not come to Christ for deliverance—I want to ask each one of you, "How long wilt thou cut thyself?" Why, there are some persons who think that before they can believe in Christ they must undergo a world of torture! Whence do they derive the notion, and what Scripture do they twist to support it? My commission runs thus, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." I do not find that I am to look out for those who have undergone a long probation, and then tell them to believe in Christ; but every creature is to hear the good news, that whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation. So far the gospel message gives no hint of a sort of purgatory in this life; but it deals with every creature as it finds him. Now, you think, "Well, I must not—I really must not lay hold upon this salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus; I dare not be so greatly blest. I must first of all be tortured with conviction, and afflicted with despair." Alas, that you should thus choose to be miserable, and refuse to be made happy! I am forced again to put to you the question, "How long wilt thou cut thyself?" Find me, if you can, any place where the Lord requires this at your hand—that you should be dragged about by the devil—that you should be despairing, that you should be tempted to blaspheme, and all that. I know that some who have come to Christ have endured such misery, but I defy you to prove that it is any part of the gospel, and that we are to preach up such an experience as a necessary preface to believing in Christ. The case is far otherwise.

Hear me, I beseech you, and be not obstinately wedded to your wretchedness. You are a sinner: you cannot question that fact. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. If you trust him—you are saved. This, in brief, is the glad tidings of salvation. This is the

gospel way. Who has required at your hands that you should despond? that you should despair? that you should deny the promises of God? that you should put from you the invitation of mercy? that you should remain outside the gospel feast, and say, "I dare not enter, for I am not hungry enough, nor poor enough, nor ragged enough, nor filthy enough"? Oh, that you were wise, and would cut yourself no more with these absurd objections to infinite grace! How can this cutting of yourself, this tearing of yourself with anguish, bring you any benefit? Do you think that God delights in it? Is he a God who delights in the misery of his creatures? Will it not be joy to him that you should believe in his Son, and find peace? He willeth not the death of any, but that they should turn unto him and live. "Oh," said one to me, "I cannot think that the way can be so plain, for my grandfather was so miserable for years that they had to put him into a lunatic asylum before he found the Saviour." You smile, but the good woman who told me this was in terrible earnest. I cannot help quoting what she said, for it was the natural and outspoken form of an error which lurks in thousands of minds. I believe that many think they must be driven near to madness or they will not be able to come to Christ. But what benefit could this despair possibly be to you? If the gospel were, "Doubt and be saved," I would bid you doubt. And if it were, "Despair and be saved," I would preach up despair to you with all my might, though it might go a little against the grain. But it is not so written. The Scripture is, "Believe: trust: confide: rely. Trust in Jesus—and you are saved."

Despairing and desponding are not commanded in the gospel, but they are forbidden by it. Do not cultivate these gross follies, these deadly sins. Do not multiply these poisonous weeds—this hemlock and this darnel—as if they were fair flowers of Paradise.

How long do you mean to continue in this wretched condition? Have you set yourself a certain point of anguish up to which you will go, and then you will trust Christ? The sooner you reach that point the better. But suppose that, in reaching that point, you should grow hardened in sin, and perish therein! Suppose that in striving to be more tender, the very skin of your soul should turn hard and horny, so that you no longer feel anything! I have known that to occur. I have known persons attend places of worship many years, and always say, "I do not feel tender enough and penitent enough," and all the time they have been growing invulnerable to the shafts of God's Word, till they have perished in an unfeeling, indifferent, immovable condition. They have hugged a sort of self-righteousness of feeling, and would not give it up to believe in Christ, and that self-righteousness has been their destruction. Beware lest you lose all feeling because you idolize feeling. Beware lest your heart turn to an adamant stone because you prefer your own feelings to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

Why, my friends, if you are allowed to follow up this despairing policy much further, some of you will go out of your senses! Those who love to take up a reproach against the Lord Jesus frequently declare that religion has deprived many people of their reason. But the fact is that many lose their senses because they refuse true religion, and then take to sullenness, and morbid feeling. Why blame Jesus for the fact

that men refuse him, and so find no rest? I do fear that many have fought against believing in Christ till their uneasiness has weighed them down, and so they have lost their reason. They have been indulging their pride; and, not yielding themselves up to Jesus, it has cost them dear. I am afraid that some of you, who now feel God's hand heavy upon you, will come to utter hopelessness, unless you yield to the Lord Jesus very soon. Therefore, I pray you, make haste about it, and may the blessed Spirit lead you to obey the gospel, believe in Jesus, and enter into rest!

Besides all this, remember that you may die while you are, as you think, getting ready for the Saviour. The Saviour never told you to get ready for him. Have we not preached to you continually that you are to come as you are? Alas! you will not come just as you are, but will try to mend and improve; and I have a dreadful fear upon me that you will die in the process of mending and improving. If it should be so, where will you be? Why, you will be guilty of having set up your mending and improving in the place of Christ, and that is a serious insult to the great God and his dear Son! You will have taken more notice of your own efforts to save yourself than of Christ's atoning death. Will not this seal your condemnation? Jesus will save you, if you will have him, just as you are, whoever you may be. But if you reply, "Not just as I am; I must be somewhat better before I can trust him"; then, if you perish while you are getting somewhat better, who shall be to blame? A sick man is dying, and the physician says, "Here is medicine that will restore you; will you take it?" The dying man answers, "Sir, I believe in your medicine, but I will not take it till I feel better." If that man dies, who murders him? Shall the physician be blamed? Surely not. On his own head his death must lie. And recollect that it will be as certainly your ruin to refuse Christ because you want to be better, as it will be to refuse him from any other reason. Any reason which leads you to reject the Lord Jesus is a bad one. One man refuses Christ because he hates him, and he blasphemes him; another refuses him because he thinks that he must be a little better; there may be a difference in the motive, but the result will amount to the same thing. Take heed, I pray you, lest through your pride in refusing to receive the gospel just now, and just as you are, you should put it away from you till you get where there will be no gospel preaching, and no invitations to Christ, and you are cast away for ever.

Now let me ask you this question: *what good have you got by all this up till now?* O you, good sir, who always mean to have Christ by-and-by, how much farther have you got after all your good intentions and painful waitings? You used to sit in that pew twelve, fifteen, twenty years ago, mayhap; and even then you had hopeful resolves. Are you any nearer Christ now than you were then? Say, does the preaching affect you any more than it did in those bygone days? "No," say you, "not half so much." This is a dangerous symptom: what does it mean? Has the preacher changed? I will take my share of the blame. I grow older, I know. Perhaps I get more stupid too; but still, when I sat yesterday to see the converts coming to join the church, I saw them till I had not physical power to see any more, for

God had brought so many to come and tell me that I had led them to the Saviour. Therefore I think that there cannot be much difference in my preaching. It must be *you* that are getting hard! I fear you are getting chilled into indifference, and I pray that the deadly process may go no further. Therefore I pray God that you may end this mischief, this death, this ruin to your soul; and may be driven or drawn—whichever God pleases—to say at once, "I will immediately cast myself on Jesus. If I perish, I will perish clinging to his cross. If there be power in trusting Christ to give a man peace, liberty, salvation, holiness, then I will have it; and if there be not this power, I will at least know by personal trial that it is not so, and that free grace is not for me."

Would to God that you, my dear hearers, would leave all things else, and just come and cast yourselves on Jesus! If you will not, I must again persecute each one of you with this enquiry, "How long wilt thou cut thyself?" How long must you go on with your piteous prayers, and get no answer? Must you have more tears, more groans, more cries, more despairs, more regrets, more broken vows? How long will you cut yourselves with these vain attempts to be your own Saviour? How long must you shut heaven's door against yourself by a horrible resolve to disbelieve? How long will you be so diligent to pull down an avalanche of wrath upon your own head? How long will you refuse the bread of heaven, and determine to perish with famine, while all the plenty of God's grace is round about you? How long? How long? God end it ere you cross the portal of this house of prayer, and go down those stone steps, which will again conduct you to the level of a careless world! Stop here till you have yielded yourself to Jesus. I beseech you not to go home a stranger to eternal life. The Lord grant that you may now throw yourself into the arms of Jesus, for his dear name's sake!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxxii. 1—7; Romans x. 1—17.

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TO THE SADDEST OF THE SAD.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 3RD, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage."—Exodus vi. 9.

LITTLE words often contain great meanings. It is often the case with that monosyllable "*so*." In the present instance we must lay stress upon it and read the text thus—"Moses spake *so* unto the children of Israel." That is, he said what God told him to say. He did not invent his message. He did not think out the gospel that he had to carry to the people. He was simply a repeater of the divine message. As he received it, *so* he spake it. "Moses spake *so* unto the children of Israel." If he had not done *so*, the responsibility must have rested upon himself, whether the nation was moved by his words or not; but when he was simply God's ambassador, saying only what God would have him say, his responsibility was limited. If he delivered the Lord's own word and it failed to win the heart of Israel, he could not be blamed. Although it was a great sadness of heart to him that the people did not, and even could not, receive the divine message, yet as far as he was concerned, his conscience was clear. It is ever so with the preacher of the gospel: if he declares the word of the Lord as he has received it, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, he is clear before God, whatever his hearers may do or may not do.

I often wonder what those preachers do who feel called to make up their message as they go on; for if they fail, their failure must be attributed in great measure to their want of ability to make up a moving tale. They have to spread their sails to the breeze of the age, and to pick up a gospel that comes floating down to them on the stream of time, altering every week in the year; and they must have an endless task to catch this new idea, or, as they put it, to keep abreast of the age. Unless, indeed, like chameleons, they have a natural aptitude to change colour, they must have a worrying time of it, and a horrible amount of shifting to get through. When they have done

their best to preach this gospel of their own, then they are accountable for having made that gospel. For every bit of its teaching they are accountable, because they were the manufacturers of it, and it came forth from their foundry, bearing their stamp. If they take this yoke upon them, and so refuse to learn of Christ, they will find no rest to their souls. To me the preaching of the Lord's own gospel is a joy and a privilege; for notwithstanding that concern for your souls loads me with the burden of the Lord, it is his burden, and not one which I have selected for myself. I often feel on a Sabbath night when I go home weary: "I know that I have preached what I believe to be God's gospel." I have not said anything—I have not intended to say anything—that was my own. I have not left out, at least, I have not intended to leave out, anything that was in the text, nor anything which I believe to be the teaching of the gospel of Christ. And then if you do not receive it, that is a sorrowful business, but it is no concern of mine so that I shall have to answer for it at the last great day. When a man-servant goes to the door with a message from his master, if you do not like what he tells you, do not be angry with him. What has he to do with it? Has he said what his master told him to say? If he has, then be angry with his master if you must be, or accept what his master says if you think fit; but let the poor man that brought the message be held clear if he has faithfully reported his master's words. I claim that, if I have preached my Master's gospel, whether men are saved or lost, whether they accept it or reject it, I must leave that with themselves, and not have their sin laid at my door. How heartily do I cry to God that the Word may not be a savour of death unto death, but a savour of life unto life; but oh, my hearers, if you perish after hearing the gospel of God, do not think that you can cast the blame on me.

Now, the message Moses brought was rejected, and he knew why it was rejected. He could see the reason. The people were in such bondage, they were so miserably ground down, they were so unhappy and hopeless, that what he spake seemed to them to be as idle words. There are hundreds of reasons why men reject the gospel. We will not go into them to-night. He that wants to beat a dog can always find a stick, and he that wishes to reject Christ can always find a reason for it; and, however unreasonable a reason may be, it will serve a sinner's turn, when that turn happens to be the making of some excuse for himself why he should not yield to the Saviour. Oh that men were less cunning in making apologies for refusing the Lord Jesus!

Amongst all the reasons, however, that I ever heard, that with which I have the most sympathy, is this one—that some cannot receive Christ because they are so full of anguish, and are so crushed in spirit that they cannot find strength enough of mind to entertain a hope that by any possibility salvation can come to them. It is to their sad case that I desire to speak. I think that I can speak to the case, if God help me, for I have felt the same. I do remember when I could not believe even Jesus himself by reason of sore anguish and straitness of spirit; and, therefore, as one who has worn the chains, I speak to those who are still in chains. I know the clanking of those fetters,

and what it is to feel the damp of the stone walls, and to fear that there is no coming out of prison, and to be so despairing that even when the emancipator turned the great key in the lock, and set the door wide open, yet still my heart had made for itself a direr cage, and I could not believe in the possibility of liberty, and therefore I sat bound in a dungeon of my own creation. Ah! there is no Bastille so awful as that which is built by despair, and kept under the custody of a crushed spirit. Many are the desponding ones whose eyes fail so that they cannot look up, or look out. To such I speak. May God speak through me by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter!

I. And first, will you notice that what Moses brought to these people was glad tidings. IT WAS A FREE AND FULL GOSPEL MESSAGE. To them it was the gospel of salvation from a cruel bondage, the gospel of hope, the gospel of glorious promise. It is a very admirable type and metaphorical description of what the gospel is to us. Moses' word to them was singularly clear, cheering, and comforting; but they could not receive it. "They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit and cruel bondage."

First, Moses spoke to them *about their God.* He said, "You have a God, and his name is Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." They looked up from their bricks, and they seemed to say, "God? What have we to do with him? Oh, that the straw were given us to make our bricks! We are up to our necks in this filthy Nile mud, making the bricks, and you come and talk to us about God. Go, and preach to Pharaoh and the taskmasters that rule us; but as for us poor creatures, slaves that we are, we do not understand you. What do you mean by JAH, Jehovah, our God? Bring us more garlic and onions, or lessen our daily tasks, or take away the sticks from our drivers, and then we will listen to you." And so they shook their heads, and said that such mysteries and theologies were not for them. And yet, dear sirs, if any of you are in such a case, it is for you. Jehovah, Israel's God, was indeed their only hope, and he is your only hope also. Alas, that they should be so unwise as to refuse to let the light shine upon them, for light it was! What a poor reason for refusing light because the night is so dark! Man's best hope lies in his God. O you whose lives are bitter with toil and want, there is something for you after all, much better than the hard saying, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink?" There is an inheritance above the grinding toil of every-day life. There is a portion much better than this killing care, which frets so many of you, and makes life a calamity to you. Do not, therefore, because of the heaviness of your lot, refuse to hear about God, your Maker, your Benefactor. In that direction lies your only real hope. Have this God for a father and a friend, and life will wear another aspect, and you will be another man.

Then Moses went on to tell them *about a covenant.* He said, "You have a God, and that God has said, 'I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.'" Covenant? Why, many of them would hardly know what it meant. "Covenant?" said they, "God make a covenant with us poor brickmakers, that have to slave

from morning to night without wage, and now are forced to make bricks without straw?" God and a covenant: these are strange words in ears that hear the curses of taskmasters and the crack of their whips. It sounded like mockery to them to talk of such high matters. I doubt not they muttered to themselves, "This Moses is a mad philosopher who has grand mouthfuls of words; but what are words to us? A bit of fish out of the Nile, or a cucumber from the irrigated fields would be a deal better than talking to us about a covenant." And yet, hearken. If any of you are in a sad condition, your best hopes may lie this way. What if God has entered into covenant with you that he will bless you for Jesus Christ's sake? There may be a mint of wealth for the sons of poverty in this everlasting covenant; and the best kind of wealth, too. There may be for you a promised emancipation which will break the fetters which now hold you, and set you free. I tell you that in the covenant of grace lies the charter of the poor and needy. At any rate, if you come under that covenant it cannot be worse with you than it is now. You seem now to be under a covenant of bondage and of sorrow, and any change will be for the better. If there be another covenant—a covenant of grace, and love, and peace, and everlasting faithfulness, it were worth while to hear about it, and to seek it out until you discover whether you have part and lot in it. I entreat you, look into this matter. Hearken diligently to the voice of the gospel. Hear, and your soul shall live.

So, when Moses had spoken of the covenant, he went on to speak yet more *about God's pity to them.* He reported that Jehovah had said, "I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant." I fancy that those words opened their eyes a little. They looked up and said to one another, "Is there, indeed, a God who has heard our groanings? Oh, but," they muttered, "look at the many years we have been groaning. Why, it is forty years since this man Moses first came out and saw our burdens. Where has he been these forty years? What is the use of pity that is so tardy in its movements?" And yet, dear sirs, if you are inclined to talk so, it may be that if God be slow he is sure; and if he be slow to you it is out of patience and long-suffering to others. He knows best when and how to save his people. Remember that when the tale of bricks was doubled then Moses came; and when you are getting to your very worst, and your night is darkening into a sort of hellish midnight, it may be that your darkness is coming to an end. Therefore, be not so bowed down as to let the brick-earth get into your ears and eyes and make you deaf and blind. But do listen if there be anything to be heard that is better than your daily moans and groans. Listen to the messenger of God who comes to tell of what God is about to do. He is a God full of compassion, and he has respect unto broken hearts and tearful eyes.

And then Moses went on further with his blessed gospel message to tell them *about the Lord's resolve to rescue them by a great redemption.* The Lord had said, "I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage." Do you notice that all along the Lord uses strong words, and speaks like a great king? "I am Jehovah. I will. I will.

I will." When you go home just notice what a number of "I wills" there are in this declaration of the great God. When God says, "I will," he means it; depend upon it. He does not ask our leave, or wait for our help. "I will" is omnipotence putting itself into speech. Jehovah will accomplish what he promises. He told them, therefore, that he meant to come to their rescue. "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments." God means to save you. Poor, troubled, confessedly guilty sinner, believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and trust yourself with him, and the Lord will save you. He will deliver you from all the guilt of your past life, from the evil habits of your present life, and from the temptations of your future life. He will break the yoke of Satan from off your neck and make you to be no more the slave of sin, but you shall become the child of the living God.

Moses told them *about the Lord's ways of grace and the inheritance* which he had prepared for them. My message is after the same sort. Thus saith Jehovah to-night, in the preaching of the gospel to every one that will believe in Jesus, "I will save and I will deliver you; and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord." These are great words, but they come from the mouth of the great God, who cannot lie. Wherefore believe them, and take heart of hope. God will take you, poor guilty ones, to be his children. He will promote you to be his willing servants. He will use you for his glory though now you dishonour his name. He will sanctify you and cleanse you, and he will bring you to heaven, even you who have lien among the pots and have been defiled in the brick-kilns of sin. He will never rest till he makes you sit upon his throne with him, where he is glorified, world without end. This I speak to you who are in bondage. Even as Jesus said of old, so say I in my measure as his messenger: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Believe you in Christ Jesus, and he who has come to save the lost will give you as clear and clean a deliverance from the power of sin as Jehovah gave Israel deliverance from the power of the Egyptian tyrant. He will bring you out of bondage and guide you through the wilderness till you come into the eternal rest, even to a goodlier land than Canaan, though it flowed with milk and honey.

II. We come now to note that IT WAS RECEIVED WITH UNBELIEF CAUSED BY ANGUISH OF HEART. The message was from the Lord, and it was full of hope for them, but they were too much broken down to receive it. We can quite understand what that meant. Let us look into the case. They could not now receive this gospel because *they had at first caught at it, and had been disappointed.* They were under a misapprehension, for they expected to be free at once, as soon as Moses went to Pharaoh; and as they did not get immediate relief, they fell back into sullen despair. When Moses came to them and

said that God had appeared to him at the bush, and had sent him to deliver them, they bowed their heads, and worshipped. Great things they looked for on the morrow, for they were at the end of their patience; but after that, when Moses went in unto Pharaoh, and the tyrant doubled their labour by denying them straw, then they could not believe in God or in his messenger. In the process of salvation it often happens—I have seen it many times—that after persons have come to hear the gospel, after they have, in some measure, become attentive to its invitations, they have for a season been much more miserable than they were before. Have you never noticed, in taking a medicine, how often you are made to feel more sick before you are made well? It is often so in the workings of the great remedy of divine grace: it discovers to us our disease that we may the more heartily accept the heavenly medicine. Yes, and in special cases there may be evils within the spiritual system which must be thrown out in the flesh, to be made visible, and so to become the subjects of repentance and abhorrence. The man who judges with shortness and straitness of judgment, demands a remedy that will cure his soul of all evils on the spot, and if it does not evidently and immediately do this, he cries, "Away with it." I find that the Hebrew word translated "anguish" here signifies shortness. Your marginal Bibles have "straitness." So they could not believe because of the shortness of their judgment: they measured God by inches. They limited the great and infinite God to minutes and days; and so, as they found themselves at first getting into a worse case than before, they said to Moses, deliberately, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." They did as good as say—You have done us no good; indeed you have increased our miseries; and we cannot believe in you or accept your message as really from God, seeing it has caused us a terrible increase of our sufferings.

Grace may truly and effectually come to a heart, and for a while cause no joy, no peace; but the reverse. I have known many a man coming to this Tabernacle, who has been prospering in business, and so on, and yet he has been going down to hell as fast as ever he could travel. Well, he has come and heard the gospel, and he has made a great many improvements in his conduct, and has become a regular and attentive hearer; and at that very time he has fallen into an affliction the like of which he had never experienced before; and he has consequently complained, "Why, I am worse instead of better. I find my heart grows more rebellious against God than ever it was before." I do not wonder that it should be so, for I have seen so many examples of it. The discipline of the household of God begins very early. But a present increase of sorrow has nothing to do with what the main result will be, except that it works towards it in a mysterious manner. Perhaps what you at first thought was genuine faith was not faith; and God is going to knock down the false before he builds up the true. If you had an old house, and any friend of yours were to say, "John, I will build you a new house. When shall I begin?" "Oh!" you might say, "begin next week to build the new house." At the end of the week he has pulled half your old house down. "Oh," say you, "this is what you call building me a new house, is it? You are causing

me great loss: I wish I had never consented to your proposal." He replies, "You are most unreasonable: how am I to build you a new house on this spot without taking the old one down?" And so it often happens that the grace of God does seem in its first work to make a man even worse than he was before, because it discovers to him sins which he did not know to be there, evils which had been concealed, dangers never dreamed of. Thus the work of grace even makes his bondage seem to be heavier than ever it was; and yet this is all done in wisdom, in love, and in fulfilment of the promise which God has given. Yet I am never very much astonished when I find people ready almost to turn away from the hearing of the gospel; because, after having at first heard it with pleasure, they find that, for the time being, it involves them in even greater sorrow than before. How earnestly would I persuade them to overcome their very natural tendency to a hasty judgment! Press on, dear friend. Be of good courage. Pharaoh will not long be able to make you keep up that enormous number of bricks. Within a very few days he will be glad to get rid of you. Wait hopefully; for the God who begins in darkness will end in light, and before long you will come to understand those ways of mercy, which are now past finding out. Not many weeks after the sobbing and sighing at the brickyards, Moses and the children of Israel sang this song unto the Lord: "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." The work of deliverance began very grimly, but it ended very gloriously.

The inability of Israel to believe the message of Moses arose also from the fact that *they were earthbound by heavy oppression:* the mere struggle to exist exhausted all their energy, and destroyed all their hope. The extreme hardness of their lot made them despondent and sullen. They had to work from morning to night. The Egyptian fellahs of the present age have known what it is to work very, very hard, and to let their earnings go into the coffers of their precious princes. It seems always to have been so with wretched Egypt: it is ever the house of bondage. But these Israelites, being not even Egyptians, but strangers in Egypt, were worked without any pity or mercy. It was a daily question with them whether life was worth living under such cruel conditions. I do not wonder that a great many are unable to receive the gospel in this city of ours, because their struggle for existence is awful. I am afraid that it gets more and more intense, though even now it passes all bounds. If any of you can do anything to help the toil-worn workers, I pray you, do it. The poor workwoman, who sits so many hours with the candle and needle, and does not earn enough, when she has worked all those hours, to more than just pay the rent and keep body and soul together, do you wonder that she thinks that this gospel of ours cannot be for her, and does not care to listen to it? I know that it would be her comfort, but her soul refuseth to be comforted, she is so crushed. The dock labourer, who comes home five days out of the six having earned nothing, and hears his little children crying for bread—is it any wonder that he cannot hear about heavenly things? Why, it is with our white population very much as it was with the negro

population of Jamaica. When there was work to be had, and they could get enough to eat and more, our churches were crowded with them. They were the best of hearers and the speediest of converts; they were soon gathered into immense churches. But when everything went badly with them, and they had to work very hard barely to live, there were groups of backsliders, and multitudes who did not feel that they could go to the house of God at all. They said that they had no garments to wear, and no money to spare; and do you wonder at it? Their poverty was so grinding, and their toil so severe, that the services they had once delighted in they had no heart for. It is all very easy to say that it ought not to be so; but it is so; and it is so with multitudes in London. And yet, dear friend—if such a one has come in here to-night—I pray you do not throw away the next world because you have so little of this. This is sheer folly. If I have little here, I would make sure of the more hereafter. If you have such a struggle for existence here, you should seek that higher, nobler, better life, which would give you, even in penury and want, a joy and a comfort to which you are a stranger now. May the Holy Ghost come upon you, and raise you out of this present evil world into newness of life in Christ Jesus! I do not find that God's people get into a condition of utter desolation: they are, at their very worst, kept from total desertion; for the Lord hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." They do have to work hard, and they may come very near to want, but my observation satisfies me that they are happy still; that they are joyful still; and they are uplifted by the inner life above the down-dragging depression of external trials. I would to God that I could say a word that might comfort any child of poverty who should happen to be here to-night, and I pray the Lord himself to be their comforter and helper.

But, worst of all, there are some who seem as if they could not lay hold on Christ because *their sense of sin has become so intolerable, and the wretchedness which follows upon conviction has become so fearful, that they have grown almost to be contentedly despairing.* I hardly know any condition of mind that is worse than chronic despair, when at last that which seemed alarming enough to drive to madness settles down into a lifeless, sullen moroseness. These Israelites had at last sunk so low that they said, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." But your lot is terrible. "We know it is," they said, "but we shall never get out of it." But your bondage is horrible. "Yes, but you may make it worse by interfering. You will only aggravate our taskmasters, and bring upon us that last straw which breaks the back. Let us alone. We are doomed to suffer: we are predestined to be bondsmen. Let us go on as quietly as we may in our slavery. It may be that like poor fishes in the cave, we may lose our eyes yet, and then we shall not know that it is dark, for we shall have lost the capacity for light." Oh, it is a dreadful thing when a heart gets to that—when a man desires that Christ would depart from him, and let him alone to perish. Do not some men virtually say, "I know I am lost. Let me enjoy myself as well as I can; I cannot—I cannot enjoy sin; but don't vex my conscience. Do not worry me with your talk here, for I shall suffer enough hereafter. Do not tantalize me about saving faith,

for I shall never believe. Do not begin talking to me about repentance. I shall never have a soft and tender heart; I know I never shall." A man who has begun to be numbed with cold, cries to his comrades, "Leave me to sleep myself to death"; and thus do despairing ones ask to be left in their misery. Dear soul, we cannot, we dare not, thus desert you. I will tell you what you shall do, dear soul; do give me a hearing. In the name of God, believe that there is hope yet—that even now Christ Jesus invites men, and especially such as you, to put their trust in him. O you who are burdened with sin, he calls you to let him be your Saviour. If there is a man in the world he died for, you are the man. If I see a physician hurrying down the street in his brougham, and anybody says to me, "Where is that doctor going?" if I knew every house in the street, I should pick out the case of a man that I knew to be in the worst condition, and most near to death's door. "Sir," I should say, "the doctor is going there. That dying person needs him most, and I believe that he is hurrying to his bedside." If there is one man here that is worse than any other, more sad, more sick, more sorry, more despairing than another, my Lord Jesus Christ, who is here, has come to meet with such a one. O troubled heart, Jesus has come to seek and to save *you!* I am sure it is so. Hope thou! Hope thou! Hope thou! Thou art not beyond hope of salvation.

> See, O soul, thou'rt yet alive,
> Not in torment; not in hell.
> Still doth his good Spirit strive,
> With the chief of sinners dwell.

Lift up thy eyes, for thou art not yet where the rich man was after his death and burial. Do not yet despair. May be, there awaits thee yet a happy life of joy in God. The sun may yet bring thee brighter days, days of peace, and rest, and usefulness. Did you never hear the story of John Newton, on the coast of Africa? He had got himself into such a state by his sins, his drunkenness, his vice, that at last he was left on the coast of Africa, and virtually became a slave. Did John Newton dream, when he wandered up and down with a hungry belly, full of fever, and at death's door, that the day would come when he would be the companion and dear friend of Cowper, and when the church of St. Mary Woolnoth, over there in the city, would be crowded every time he stood up to preach of free grace and dying love? He did not think it, but it was so predestined. Something equally gracious may be ordained for you. Blasphemer, you may preach the gospel yet. O thou Magdalene, full of filthiness, thou wilt yet wash his feet with thy tears, and wipe them with the hairs of thy head. Thou black villain, thou mayest yet stand among that white-robed host, of whom the angel asked, "Who are these, and whence came they?" You, even you, will sing more sweet and loud than any of them unto him that loved you and washed you from your sins in his precious blood. God make it so, and unto his name shall be praise for ever and ever!

III. I have many more things to say, but I might weary you with them rather than bless you. The message was at first not received

by Israel by reason of their anguish of soul, but IT WAS TRUE FOR ALL THAT, AND THE LORD MADE IT SO. What did the Lord do when he found that these people did not hearken to Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage? What did the Lord do? He was not going to give them up because of their wretched condition. He had said, "I will bring them out," and he meant to do it.

The first thing the Lord did to prove his persevering grace was *to commission Moses again.* (Ex. vi. 1; vii. 2.) So the Lord God, in everlasting mercy, says to his minister, "You have to preach the gospel again to them. Again proclaim my grace." It seems a terrible thing to have to pour our souls into deaf ears. Yet I shall not give it up, for I have done it with some here for nearly thirty-three years, and I may as well go on. Why should I lose so much labour? I will try again, like Peter, who, after toiling all night and taking nothing, yet let down the net at the Lord's bidding. One of these days those dead ears will be made to live. God in mercy says, "Go on with it. As long as there is breath in your body, tell them to believe in my Son, and they shall live. Tell them till you die that 'He that with his mouth confesseth, and with his heart believeth that God hath raised Christ from the dead shall be saved.'"

But the Lord did more than that for Israel. As these people had not listened to Moses, he called Moses and Aaron to him, and *he renewed their charge.* He laid it upon them—gave them again their marching orders: "He gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." A monstrous thing it did look. They would not even hear Moses; but the Lord will have his servants stand to their work. Moses and Aaron have to do it, however impossible it may appear. There is to be no backing out of it. They must know of a surety that Israel is to be delivered by their means. It is a grand point when the Lord lays the conversion of men on the hearts of his ministers, and makes them feel that they must win souls. Moses was bound to bring out Israel. "But there is Pharaoh." Pharaoh is included in the divine charge. They have to beat Pharaoh into submission. "But these children of Israel will not obey." The Lord put them in the charge: did you not observe the words, "He gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh"? Moses and Aaron, you have to bring Israel out, Pharaoh is to let them go, and Israel is to go willingly. God has issued his royal decree, and be you sure it will stand. I believe that God is saying to his church, "You have to do it. You have to gather out mine elect out of every nation under heaven." To the church in London, he says, "Bring this people out of the bondage of sin." That terrible London with all its poverty, its drunkenness, its infidelity, and licentiousness: you are to save it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Its darkness is dense; you are to shine till it is enlightened. You have to save London. So do not back out of it. "Oh," says one man, who lives down some street near this place, "Sir, I can hardly live in the street. It teems with ill-living women." You have to save them. Passing a little shop as I did the other day, I saw written up in the window, "If any poor girl that wishes to lead a better life will only step inside she will find a

friend." That is one of our dear members.* I felt so pleased as I saw it. I should like to see such a notice in a great many windows. I would like to see you live among the wicked, and put up in your windows, "If anybody wants a friend, there is one inside. Come in." You are called to save them! They must not be lost. Somebody says, "What are you talking about, Mr. Spurgeon? We cannot save them." I am talking as God said, when he told Moses and Aaron that he gave them a charge to bring his people out of Egypt. They could not do it: but yet they did it. Anyone can do what he can do, but it is only God's servant that can do what he cannot do. We, my brethren, are called to perform the impossible; we are to be familiar with miracles. Look at Ezekiel. There is a valley full of dry bones. Ezekiel is to go and say to them, "Thus saith the Lord, Ye dry bones, live." What a preposterous thing! An able divine of good repute once said that, to preach the gospel to dead sinners, was as preposterous as to wave a pocket-handkerchief over a grave. Ah, just so! Therefore, I would not have *him* do it. If the Lord has not sent him to do it he would do no good if he were to attempt to preach to the sinner dead in sin; but it is a different thing when it is my case, for I feel that I am sent to do it, and therefore I am not vexed at being thought to be acting absurdly. If God had sent me to wave a pocket-handkerchief over the dead in Nunhead cemetery, that they might live, I would go and wave that pocket-handkerchief, and they would live. To the eye of reason there is no use in preaching to men dead in sin. I freely admit *that;* but if it is a commission from God, then it is not ours to raise questions, but to do as we are bidden. God has commissioned his servants to preach the gospel to every creature. Whatever those creatures may be, we are to say to them, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This is our message and our mission, and we are just to tell the truth, and leave God to apply it to the heart. Oh that he may give us grace to tell out the gospel, and to keep on doing it till he has brought his own elect out of the bondage of sin and Satan, and saved them with an everlasting salvation!

Once more. As I told you in the reading, I greatly admire this chapter. I cannot help admiring the next thing that God did when he told his servant what to do. *The Lord began to count the heads of those whom he would redeem out of bondage.* You see the rest of the chapter is occupied with the children of Reuben, and the children of Simeon, and the children of Levi. God seemed to say, "Pharaoh, let my people go!" "I will not," said the despot. Straightway the Lord goes right down into the brick-town where the poor slaves are at work, and he makes out a list of all of them, to show that he means to set free. So many there of Simeon. So many here of Reuben. So many here of Levi. The Lord is counting them. Moreover he numbers their cattle, for he declares, "There shall not a hoof be left behind." Men say, "It is of no use counting your chickens before they are hatched"; but when it comes to God's counting those whom he means

* Since this sermon was preached, brother Bilborough has gone to his reward.

to deliver, it is another matter; for he knows what will be done, because he determines to do it, and he is almighty. He knows what is to come of the gospel, and he knows whom he means to bless. And so let Satan rage, and let adversaries do what they will, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his"; and to prove this, he goes on writing down their names, and taking an account of them. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." Now, my hearers, if you do not come to Christ, it will be your own loss, and not his. If you refuse him, it will be because you are not Christ's sheep, as he said to you. He has a people, and he will save *them*, whether you, my hearer, believe in Jesus or wilfully refuse to do so. Out of the mass of mankind a company shall come to him, and shall glorify his name, as it is written, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." Oh, that you had such a mind in you that you would accept his gospel! Will you do so even now? Trust Christ, and you are saved. Look unto him, and be ye saved.

The Lord bless you, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Exodus iv. 31 to vi. 14.

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"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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THE SLUGGARD'S FARM.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 10TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction."—Proverbs xxiv. 30—32.

No doubt Solomon was sometimes glad to lay aside the robes of state, escape from the forms of court, and go through the country unknown. On one occasion, when he was doing so, he looked over the broken wall of a little estate which belonged to a farmer of his country. This estate consisted of a piece of ploughed land and a vineyard. One glance showed him that it was owned by a sluggard, who neglected it; for the weeds had grown right plentifully, and covered all the face of the ground. From this, Solomon gathered instruction. Men generally learn wisdom if they have wisdom. The artist's eye sees the beauty of the landscape because he has beauty in his mind. "To him that hath shall be given," and he shall have abundance; for he shall reap a harvest even from a field that is covered with thorns and nettles. There is a great difference between one man and another in the use of the mind's eye. I have a book entitled, "The Harvest of a Quiet Eye," and a good book it is: the harvest of a quiet eye can be gathered from a sluggard's land as well as from a well-managed farm. When we were boys we were taught a little poem, called, "Eyes and no Eyes," and there was much of truth in it; for some people have eyes and see not, which is much the same as having no eyes; while others have quick eyes for spying out instruction. Some look only at the surface, while others see not only the outside shell but the living kernel of truth which is hidden in all outward things.

We may find instruction everywhere. To a spiritual mind nettles have their use, and weeds have their doctrine. Are not all thorns and thistles meant to be teachers to sinful men? Are they not brought forth of the earth on purpose that they may show us what sin has done, and the kind of produce that will come when we sow the seed of rebellion against God? "I went by the field of the slothful, and by

the vineyard of the man void of understanding," says Solomon; "I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction." Whatever you see, take care to consider it well, and you will not see it in vain. You shall find books and sermons everywhere, in the land and in the sea, in the earth and in the skies, and you shall learn from every living beast, and bird, and fish, and insect, and from every useful or useless plant that springs out of the ground.

We may also gather rare lessons from things that we do not like. I am sure that Solomon did not in the least degree admire the thorns and the nettles that covered the face of the vineyard, but he nevertheless found instruction in them. Many are stung by nettles, but few are taught by them. Some men are hurt by briars, but here is one who was improved by them. Wisdom hath a way of gathering grapes of thorns and figs of nettles, and she distils good from herbs which in themselves are noisome and evil. Do not fret, therefore, over thorns, but get good out of them. Do not begin stinging yourself with nettles, grip them firmly, and then use them for your soul's health. Trials and troubles, worries and turmoils, little frets and little disappointments, may all help you if you will. Like Solomon, see and consider them well—look upon them, and receive instruction.

As for us, we will now, first, consider *Solomon's description of a sluggard:* he is "a man void of understanding"; secondly, we shall notice *his description of the sluggard's land;* "it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof." When we have attended to these two matters we will close by *endeavouring to gather the instruction which this piece of waste ground may yield us.*

I. First, think of SOLOMON'S DESCRIPTION OF A SLOTHFUL MAN. Solomon was a man whom none of us would contradict, for he knew as much as all of us put together; and besides that, he was under divine inspiration when he wrote this Book of Proverbs. Solomon says, a sluggard is "a man void of understanding." The slothful man does not think so; he puts his hands in his pockets, and you would think from his important air that he had all the Bank of England at his disposal. You can see that he is a very wise man in his own esteem, for he gives himself airs which are meant to impress you with a sense of his superior abilities. How he has come by his wisdom it would be hard to say. He has never taken the trouble to think, and yet I dare not say that he jumps at his conclusions, because he never does such a thing as jump, he lies down and rolls into a conclusion. Yet he knows everything, and has settled all points: meditation is too hard work for him, and learning he never could endure; but to be clever by nature is his delight. He does not want to know more than he knows, for he knows enough already, and yet he knows nothing. The proverb is not complimentary to him, but I am certain that Solomon was right when he called him "a man void of understanding." Solomon was rather rude according to the dainty manners of the present times, because this gentleman had a field and a vineyard, and as Poor Richard saith, "When I have a horse and a cow every man biddeth me good morrow." How can a man be void of understanding who has a field and a vineyard? Is it not generally understood that you must measure a man's understanding by the amount of his

ready cash? At all events, you shall soon be flattered for your attainments if you have attained unto wealth. Such is the way of the world, but such is not the way of Scripture. Whether he has a field and a vineyard or not, says Solomon, if he is a sluggard he is a fool, or if you would like to see his name written out a little larger, he is a man empty of understanding. Not only does he not understand anything, but he has no understanding to understand with. He is empty-headed if he is a sluggard. He may be called a gentleman, he may be a landed proprietor, he may have a vineyard and a field; but he is none the better for what he has: nay, he is so much the worse, because he is a man void of understanding, and is therefore unable to make use of his property.

I am glad to be told by Solomon so plainly that a slothful man is void of understanding, for it is useful information. I have met with persons who thought they perfectly understood the doctrines of grace, who could accurately set forth the election of the saints, the predestination of God, the firmness of the divine decree, the necessity of the Spirit's work, and all the glorious doctrines of grace which build up the fabric of our faith; but these gentlemen have inferred from these doctrines that they have to do nothing, and thus they have become sluggards. Do-nothingism is their creed. They will not even urge other people to labour for the Lord, because, say they, "God will do his own work. Salvation is all of grace!" The notion of these sluggards is that a man is to wait, and do nothing; he is to sit still, and let the grass grow up to his ankles in the hope of heavenly help. To arouse himself would be an interference with the eternal purpose, which he regards as altogether unwarrantable. I have known him look sour, shake his aged head, and say hard things against earnest people who were trying to win souls. I have known him run down young people, and like a great steam ram, sink them to the bottom, by calling them unsound and ignorant. How shall we survive the censures of this dogmatic person? How shall we escape from this very knowing and very captious sluggard? Solomon hastens to the rescue and extinguishes this gentleman by informing us that he is void of understanding. Why, he is the standard of orthodoxy, and he judges everybody! Yet Solomon applies another standard to him, and says he is void of understanding. He may know the doctrine, but he does not understand it; or else he would know that the doctrines of grace lead us to seek the grace of the doctrines; and that when we see God at work we learn that he worketh in us, not to make us go to sleep, but to will and to do of his own good pleasure. God's predestination of a people is his ordaining them unto good works, that they may show forth his praise. So, if you or I shall from any doctrines, however true, draw the inference that we are warranted in being idle and indifferent about the things of God, we are void of understanding; we are acting like fools; we are misusing the gospel; we are taking what was meant for meat and turning it into poison. The sluggard, whether he is sluggish about his business or about his soul, is "a man void of understanding."

As a rule, we may measure a man's understanding by his useful activities; that is what the wise man very plainly tells us. Certain

persons call themselves "cultured," and yet they cultivate nothing. Modern thought, as far as I have seen anything of its actual working, is a bottle of smoke, out of which comes nothing solid; yet we know men who can distinguish and divide, debate and discuss, refine and refute, and all the while the hemlock is growing in the furrow, and the plough is rusting. Friend, if your knowledge, if your culture, if your education does not lead you practically to serve God in your day and generation, you have not learned what Solomon calls wisdom, and you are not like the Blessed One, who was incarnate wisdom, of whom we read that "he went about doing good." A lazy man is not like our Saviour, who said, "My father worketh hitherto, and I work." True wisdom is practical: boastful culture vapours and theorizes. Wisdom ploughs its field, wisdom hoes its vineyard, wisdom looks to its crops, wisdom tries to make the best of everything; and he who does not do so, whatever may be his knowledge of this, of that, or of the other, is "a man void of understanding."

Why is he void of understanding? Is it not because *he has opportunities which he does not use?* His day has come, his day is going, and he lets the hours glide by to no purpose. Let me not press too hardly upon anyone, but let me ask you all to press as hardly as you can upon yourselves while you enquire each one of himself—Am I employing the minutes as they fly? This man had a vineyard, but he did not cultivate it; he had a field, but he did not till it. Do you, brethren, use all your opportunities? I know we each one have some power to serve God; do we use it? If we are his children he has not put one of us where we are of necessity useless. Somewhere we may shine by the light which he has given us, though that light be only a farthing candle. Are we thus shining? Do we sow beside all waters? Do we in the morning sow our seed, and in the evening still stretch out our hand; for if not, we are rebuked by the sweeping censure of Solomon, who saith that the slothful is a "man void of understanding."

Having opportunities he did not use them, and next, *being bound to the performance of certain duties he did not fulfil them.* When God appointed that every Israelite should have a piece of land, under that admirable system which made every Israelite a landowner, he meant that each man should possess his plot, not to let it lie waste, but to cultivate it. When God put Adam in the garden of Eden it was not that he should walk through the glades and watch the spontaneous luxuriance of the unfallen earth, but that he might dress it and keep it, and he had the same end in view when he allotted each Jew his piece of land; he meant that the holy soil should reach the utmost point of fertility through the labour of those who owned it. Thus the possession of a field and a vineyard involved responsibilities upon the sluggard which he never fulfilled, and therefore he was void of understanding. What is your position, dear friend? A father? A master? A servant? A minister? A teacher? Well, you have your farms and your vineyards in those particular spheres; but if you do not use those positions aright you will be void of understanding, because you neglect the end of your existence. You miss the high calling which your Maker has set before you.

The slothful farmer was unwise in these two respects, and in another also; *for he had capacities which he did not employ*. He could have tilled the field and cultivated the vineyard if he had chosen to do so. He was not a sickly man, who was forced to keep his bed, but he was a lazybones who was there of choice.

You are not asked to do in the service of God that which is utterly beyond you, for it is expected of us according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. The man of two talents is not required to bring in the interest of five, but he is expected to bring in the interest of two. Solomon's slothful man was too idle to attempt tasks which were quite within his power. Many have a number of dormant faculties of which they are scarcely aware, and many more have abilities which they are using for themselves, and not for him who created them. Dear friends, if God has given us any power to do good, pray let us do it, for this is a wicked, weary world. We should not even cover a glow-worm's light in such a darkness as this. We should not keep back a syllable of divine truth in a world that is so full of falsehood and error. However feeble our voices, let us lift them up for the cause of truth and righteousness. Do not let us be void of understanding, because we have opportunities that we do not use, obligations that we do not fulfil, and capacities which we do not exercise.

As for a sluggard in soul matters, he is indeed void of understanding, for *he trifles with matters which demand his most earnest heed.* Man, hast thou never cultivated thy heart? Has the ploughshare never broken up the clods of thy soul? Has the seed of the Word never been sown in thee? or has it taken no root? Hast thou never watered the young plants of desire? Hast thou never sought to pull up the weeds of sin that grow in thy heart? Art thou still a piece of the bare common or wild heath? Poor soul! Thou canst trim thy body, and spend many a minute at the glass; dost thou not care for thy soul? How long thou takest to decorate thy poor flesh, which is but worm's meat, or would be in a minute if God took away thy breath! And yet all the while thy soul is uncombed, unwashed, unclad, a poor neglected thing! Oh, it should not be so! You take care of the worse part, and leave the better to perish through neglect. This is the height of folly! He that is a sluggard as to the vineyard of his heart is "a man void of understanding." If I must be idle, let it be seen in my field and my garden, but not in my soul.

Or are you a Christian? Are you really saved, and are you negligent in the Lord's work? Then, indeed, whatever you may be, I cannot help saying you have too little understanding; for surely, when a man is saved himself, and understands the danger of other men's souls, he must be in earnest in trying to pluck the firebrands from the flame. A Christian sluggard! Is there such a being? A *Christian* man on half time? A Christian man working not at all for his Lord; how shall I speak of him? *Time* does not tarry, DEATH does not tarry, HELL does not tarry; Satan is not lazy, all the powers of darkness are busy: how is it that you and I can be sluggish, if the Master has put us into his vineyard? Surely we must be void of understanding if, after being saved by the infinite love of God, we do not spend and

be spent in his service. The eternal fitness of things demands that a saved man should be an earnest man.

The Christian who is slothful in his Master's service *has no idea what he is losing;* for the very cream of religion lies in holy consecration to God. Some people have just enough religion to make it questionable whether they have any or not. They have enough godliness to make them uneasy in their ungodliness. They have washed enough of their face to show the dirt upon the rest of it. "I am glad," said a servant, "that my mistress takes the sacrament, for otherwise I should not know she had any religion at all." You smile, and well you may. It is ridiculous that some people should have no goods in their shop, and yet advertise their business in all the papers; should make a show of religion, and yet have none of the Spirit of God. I wish some professors would do Christ the justice to say, "No, I am *not* one of his disciples; do not think so badly of him as to imagine that I can be one of them." We ought to be reflections *of* Christ; but I fear many are reflections *upon* Christ. When we see a lot of lazy servants, we are apt to think that their master must be a very idle person himself, or he would never put up with them. He who employs sluggards, and is satisfied with their snail-like pace, cannot be a very active man himself. Oh, let not the world think that Christ is indifferent to human woe, that Christ has lost his zeal, that Christ has lost his energy! yet I fear they will say it, or think it, if they see those who profess to be labourers in the vineyard of Christ nothing better than mere sluggards. The slothful, then, is "a man void of understanding"; he loses the honour and pleasure which he would find in serving his Master; he is a dishonour to the cause which he professes to venerate, and he is storing up thorns for his dying pillow. Let that stand as settled—the slothful, whether he be a minister, deacon, or private Christian, is "a man void of understanding."

II. Now, secondly, LET US LOOK AT THE SLUGGARD'S LAND: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof." Note, first, that *land will produce something.* Soil which is good enough to be made into a field and a vineyard must and will yield some fruit or other; and so you and I, in our hearts, and in the sphere God gives us to occupy, will be sure to produce something. We cannot live in this world as entire blanks; we shall either do good or do evil, as sure as we are alive. If you are idle in Christ's work, you are active in the devil's work. The sluggard by sleeping was doing more for the cultivation of thorns and nettles than he could have done by any other means. As a garden will either yield flowers or weeds, fruits or thistles, so something either good or evil will come out of our household, our class, or our congregation. If we do not produce a harvest of good wheat, by labouring for Christ, we shall sow tares to be bound up in bundles for the last dread burning.

Note again that, if it be not farmed for God, *the soil will yield its natural produce;* and what is the natural produce of land if left to itself? What but thorns and nettles, or some other useless weeds? What is the natural produce of your heart and mine? What but sin

and misery? What is the natural produce of your children if you leave them untrained for God? What but unholiness and vice? What is the natural produce of this great city if we leave its streets, and lanes, and alleys without the gospel. What but crime and infamy? Some harvest there will be, and the sheaves will be the natural produce of the soil, which is sin, death, and corruption.

If we are slothful, *the natural produce of our heart and of our sphere will be most inconvenient and unpleasant to ourselves.* Nobody can sleep on thorns, or make a pillow of nettles. No rest can come out of an idleness which lets ill alone, and does not by God's Spirit strive to uproot evil. While you are sleeping, Satan will be sowing. If you withhold the seed of good, Satan will be lavish with the seed of evil, and from that evil will come anguish and regret for time, and, it may be, for eternity. O man, the garden put into thy charge, if thou waste thy time in slumber, will reward thee with all that is noisome and painful! "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

In many instances there will be a great deal of this evil produce; for a field and a vineyard will yield more thistles and nettles than a piece of ground that has never been reclaimed. If the land is good enough for a garden, it will present its owner with a fine crop of weeds if he only stays his hand. A choice bit of land fit for a vineyard of red wine will render such a profusion of nettles to the slothful that he shall rub his eyes with surprise. The man who might do most for God, if he were renewed, will bring forth most for Satan if he be let alone. The very region which would have glorified God most if the grace of God were there to convert its inhabitants, will be that out of which the vilest enemies of the gospel will arise. Rest assured of that; the best will become the worst if we neglect it. Neglect is all that is needed to produce evil. If you want to know the way of salvation, I must take some pains to tell you; but if you want to know the way to be lost, my reply is easy; for it is only a matter of negligence:—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" If you desire to bring forth a harvest unto God, I may need long to instruct you in ploughing, sowing, and watering; but if you wish your mind to be covered with Satan's hemlock, you have only to leave the furrows of your nature to themselves. The slothful man asks for "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," and the thorns and thistles multiply beyond all numbering, and prepare for him many a sting.

While we look upon the lazy man's vineyard, let us also peep into the ungodly sluggard's heart. He does not care about repentance and faith. To think about his soul, to be in earnest about eternity, is too much for him. He wants to take things easy, and have a little more folding of the arms to sleep. What is growing in his mind and character? In some of the spiritual sluggards you can see drunkenness, uncleanness, covetousness, anger, and pride, and all sorts of thistles and nettles; or where these ranker weeds do not appear, by reason of the restraint of pious connections, you find other sorts of sin. The heart cannot be altogether empty; either Christ or the devil will possess it. My dear friend, if you are not decided for God, you cannot

be a neutral. In this war every man is for God or for his enemy. You cannot remain like a sheet of blank paper. The legible handwriting of Satan is upon you—can you not see the blots? Unless Christ has written across the page his own sweet name, the autograph of Satan is visible. You may say, "I do not go into open sin; I am moral," and so forth. Ah! if you would but look, and consider, and search into your heart, you would see that enmity to God and to his ways, and hatred of purity, are there. You do not love God's law, nor love his Son, nor love his gospel; you are alienated in your heart, and there is in you all manner of evil desires and vain thoughts, and these will flourish and increase so long as you are a spiritual sluggard, and leave your heart uncultivated. Oh, may the Spirit of God arouse you; may you be stirred to anxious, earnest thought, and then you will see that these rank growths must be uprooted, and that your heart must be turned up by the plough of conviction, and sown with the good seed of the gospel, till a harvest rewards the great Husbandman.

Friend, if you believe in Christ, I want to peep over the hedge into *your heart* also, if you are a sluggish Christian; for I fear that nettles and thistles are threatening you also. Did I not hear you sing the other day—

"'Tis a point I long to know"?

That point will often be raised, for doubt is a seed which is sure to grow in lazy men's minds. I do not remember reading in Mr. Wesley's diary a question about his own salvation. He was so busy in the harvest of the Master that it did not occur to him to distrust his God. Some Christians have little faith in consequence of their having never sown the grain of mustard seed which they have received. If you do not sow your faith by using it, how can it grow? When a man lives by faith in Christ Jesus, and his faith exercises itself actively in the service of his Lord, it takes root, grows upward, and becomes strong, till it chokes his doubts. Some have sadly morbid forebodings; they are discontented, fretful, selfish, murmuring, and all because they are idle. These are the weeds that grow in sluggards' gardens. I have known the slothful become so peevish that nothing could please them; the most earnest Christian could not do right for them; the most loving Christians could not be affectionate enough; the most active church could not be energetic enough; they detected all sorts of wrong where God himself saw much of the fruit of his Spirit. This censoriousness, this contention, this perpetual complaining is one of the nettles that are quite sure to grow in men's gardens when they fold their arms in sinful ease. If your heart does not yield fruit to God it will certainly bring forth that which is mischievous in itself, painful to you, and injurious to your fellow-men. Often the thorns choke the good seed; but it a very blessed thing when the good seed comes up so thick and fast that it chokes the thorns. God enables certain Christians to become so fruitful in Christ that their graces and works stand thick together, and when Satan throws in the tares they cannot grow because there is no room for them. The Holy Spirit by his power makes evil to become weak in the heart, so that it no longer keeps the upper hand. If you are

slothful, friend, look over the field of your heart, and weep at the sight.

May I next ask you to look into *your own house* and home? It is a dreadful thing when a man does not cultivate the field of his own family. I recollect in my early days a man who used to walk out with me into the villages when I was preaching. I was glad of his company till I found out certain facts, and then I shook him off, and I believe he hooked on to somebody else, for he must needs be gadding abroad every evening of the week. He had many children, and these grew up to be wicked young men and women, and the reason was that the father, while he would be at this meeting and that, never tried to bring his own children to the Saviour. What is the use of zeal abroad if there is neglect at home? How sad to say, "My own vineyard have I not kept"! Have you never heard of one who said he did not teach his children the ways of God because he thought they were so young that it was very wrong to prejudice them, and he had rather leave them to choose their own religion when they grew older? One of his boys broke his arm, and while the surgeon was setting it the boy was swearing all the time. "Ah!" said the good doctor, "I told you what would happen. You were afraid to prejudice your boy in the right way, but the devil had no such qualms; he has prejudiced him the other way, and pretty strongly too." It is our duty to prejudice our field in favour of corn, or it will soon be covered with thistles. Cultivate a child's heart for good, or it will go wrong of itself, for it is already depraved by nature. Oh that we were wise enough to think of this, and leave no little one to become a prey to the destroyer!

As it is with homes, so it is with *schools*. A gentleman who joined this church some time ago had been an atheist for years, and in conversing with him I found that he had been educated at one of our great public schools, and to that fact he traced his infidelity. He said that the boys were stowed away on Sunday in a lofty gallery at the far end of a church, where they could scarcely hear a word that the clergyman said, but simply sat imprisoned in a place where it was dreadfully hot in summer and cold in winter. On Sundays there were prayers, and prayers, and prayers, but nothing that ever touched his heart; until he was so sick of prayers that he vowed if he once got out of the school he would have done with religion. This is a sad result, but a frequent one. You Sunday-school teachers can make your classes so tiresome to the children that they will hate Sunday. You can fritter away the time in school without bringing the lads and lasses to Christ, and so you may do more hurt than good. I have known Christian fathers who by their severity and want of tenderness have sown their family field with the thorns and thistles of hatred to religion instead of scattering the good seed of love to it. Oh, that we may so live among our children that they may not only love us, but love our Father who is in heaven! May fathers and mothers set such an example of cheerful piety that sons and daughters shall say, "Let us tread in our father's footsteps, for he was a happy and a holy man. Let us fellow our mother's ways, for she was sweetness itself." If piety does not rule in your house, when we pass by your

home we shall see disorder, disobedience, pride of dress, folly, and the beginnings of vice. Let not your home be a sluggard's field, or you will have to rue it in years to come.

Let every deacon, every class-leader, and also every minister enquire diligently into the state of the field he has to cultivate. You see, brothers and sisters, if you and I are set over any department of our Lord's work, and we are not diligent in it, we shall be like barren trees planted in an orchard, which are a loss altogether, because they occupy the places of other trees which might have brought forth fruit unto their owners. We shall cumber the ground, and do damage to our Lord, unless we render him actual service. Will you think of this? If you could be put down as a mere cipher in the accounts of Christ, that would be very sad: but, brother, it cannot be so, you will cause a deficit unless you create a gain. Oh that through the grace of God we may be profitable to our Lord and Master! Who among us can look upon his life-work without some sorrow? If anything has been done aright we ascribe it all to the grace of God; but how much there is to weep over! How much that we would wish to amend! Let us not spend time in idle regrets, but pray for the Spirit of God, that in the future we may not be void of understanding, but may know what we ought to do, and where the strength must come from with which to do it, and then give ourselves up to the doing of it.

I beg you once more to look at the great field of *the world*. Do you see how it is overgrown with thorns and nettles? If an angel could take a survey of the whole race, what tears he would shed, if angels could weep! What a tangled mass of weeds the whole earth is! Yonder the field is scarlet with the poppy of popery, and over the hedge it is yellow with the wild mustard of Mahometanism. Vast regions are smothered with the thistles of infidelity and idolatry. The world is full of cruelty, oppression, drunkenness, rebellion, uncleanness, misery. What the moon sees! What God's sun sees! What scenes of horror! How far is all this to be attributed to a neglectful church? Nearly nineteen hundred years are gone, and the sluggard's vineyard is but little improved! England has been touched with the spade, but I cannot say that it has been thoroughly weeded or ploughed yet. Across the ocean another field equally favoured knows well the ploughman, and yet the weeds are rank. Here and there a little good work has been done, but the vast mass of the world still lies a moorland never broken up, a waste, a howling wilderness. What has the church been doing all these years? She ceased after a few centuries to be a missionary church, and from that hour she almost ceased to be a living church. Whenever a church does not labour for the reclaiming of the desert it becomes itself a waste. You shall not find on the roll of history that for a length of time any Christian community has flourished after it has become negligent of the outside world. I believe that if we are put into the Master's vineyard, and will not take away the weeds, neither shall the vine flourish, nor shall the corn yield its increase. However, instead of asking what the church has been doing for these nineteen hundred years, let us ask ourselves: What are we going to do now? Are the missions of the churches of Great Britain always to be such poor, feeble things as they are? Are the

best of our Christian young men always going to stay at home? We go on ploughing the home field a hundred times over, while millions of acres abroad are left to the thorn and the nettle. Shall it always be so? God send us more spiritual life, and wake us up from our sluggishness, or else when the holy watcher gives in his report, he will say, "I went by the field of the sluggish church, and it was all grown over with thorns and nettles, and the stone wall was broken down, so that one could scarcely tell which was the church and which was the world; yet still she slept, and slept, and slept, and nothing could waken her."

III. I conclude by remarking that THERE MUST BE SOME LESSON IN ALL THIS. I cannot teach it as I would, but I want to learn it myself. I will speak it as though I were talking to myself.

The first lesson is, that *unaided nature always will produce thorns and nettles, and nothing else.* My soul, if it were not for grace, this is all thou wouldst have produced. Beloved, are you producing anything else? Then it is not nature, but the grace of God that makes you produce it. Those lips that now most charmingly sing the praises of God would have been delighted with an idle ballad if the grace of God had not sanctified them. Your heart, that now cleaves to Christ, would have continued to cling to your idols—you know what they were—if it had not been for grace divine. And why should grace have visited you or me—why? Echo answers, Why? What answer can we give? "'Tis even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Let the recollection of what grace has done move us to manifest the result of that grace in our lives. Come, brothers and sisters, inasmuch as we were aforetime rich enough in the soil of our nature to produce so much of nettle and thistle—and God only knows how much we did produce—let us now pray that our lives may yield as much of good corn for the great Husbandman. Will you serve Christ less than you served your lusts? Will you make less sacrifice for Christ than you did for your sins? Some of you were whole-hearted enough when in the service of the evil one; will you be half-hearted in the service of God? Shall the Holy Spirit produce less fruit in you than that which you yielded under the spirit of evil?

God grant that we may not be left to prove what nature will produce if left to itself!

We see here, next, *the little value of natural good intentions;* for this man, who left his field and vineyard to be overgrown, always meant to work hard one of these fine days. To do him justice, we must admit that he did not mean to sleep much longer, for he said—"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Only a little doze, and then he would tuck up his sleeves and show his muscle. Probably the worst people in the world are those who have the best intentions, but never carry them out. In that way Satan lulls many to sleep. They hear an earnest sermon; but they do not arise and go to their Father; they only get as far as saying: "Yes, yes, the far country is not a fit place for me; I will not stay here long. I mean to go home by-and-by." They said that forty years ago, but nothing came of it. When they were quite youths they had serious impressions, they were almost persuaded to be Christians,

and yet they are not Christians even now. They have been slumbering forty years! Surely that is a liberal share of sleep! They never intended to dream so long, and now they do not mean to lie in bed much longer. They will not turn to Christ at once, but they are resolved to do so one day. When are you going to do it, friend? "Before I die." Going to put it off to the last hour or two, are you? And so, when unconscious, and drugged to relieve your pain, you will begin to think of your soul? Is this wise? Surely you are "void of understanding." Perhaps you will die in an hour. Did you not hear the other day of the alderman who died in his carriage? Little must he have dreamed of that. How would it have fared with you had you also been smitten while riding at your ease? Have you not heard of persons who fell dead at their work? What is to hinder your dying with a spade in your hand? I am often startled when I am told in the week that one whom I saw on Sunday is dead—gone from the shop to the judgment-seat. It is not a very long time ago since one went out at the doorway of the Tabernacle, and fell dead on the threshold. We have had deaths in the house of God, unexpected deaths; and sometimes people are hurried away unprepared who never meant to have died unconverted, who always had, from their youth up, some kind of desire to be ready, only still they wanted a little more sleep. O my hearers, take heed of little delays, and short puttings-off. You have wasted time enough already; come to the point at once before the clock strikes again. May God the Holy Spirit bring you to decision!

"Surely you do not object to my having a little more sleep?" says the sluggard. "You have waked me so soon. I only ask another little nap." "My dear man, it is far into the morning." He answers, "It is rather late, I know; but it will not be much later if I take just another doze." You wake him again, and tell him it is noon. He says, "It is the hottest part of the day: I dare say if I had been up I should have gone to the sofa and taken a little rest from the hot sun." You knock at his door when it is almost evening, and then he cries, "It is of no use to get up now, for the day is almost over." You remind him of his overgrown field and weedy vineyard, and he answers, "Yes, I must get up, I know." He shakes himself and says, "I do not think it will matter much if I wait till the clock strikes. I will rest another minute or two." He is glued to his bed, dead while he liveth, buried in his laziness. If he could sleep for ever he would, but he cannot, for the judgment-day will rouse him. It is written, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment." God grant that you spiritual sluggards may wake before that; but you will not unless you bestir yourselves betimes, for "now is the accepted time"; and it may be now or never. To-morrow is only to be found in the calendar of fools; to-day is the time of the wise man, the chosen season of our gracious God. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may lead you to seize the present hour, that you may at once give yourselves to the Lord by faith in Christ Jesus, and then from his vineyard—

> "Quick uproot
> The noisome weeds that without profit suck
> The soil's fertility from wholesome plants"!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 17TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."—2 Thessalonians iii. 5.

FOR the moment, Paul in spirit is coasting the purple shores of the celestial country. With his Thessalonian friends he is making a joyful voyage within hail of Immanuel's land. The sail is bright with the sunlight, and the keel is marking a silver track behind it. The apostle's happy soul has left far in the stern the deceivableness of unrighteousness and the rocks of error. It comes into his heart that he would gladly steer his friends into certain of those lovely creeks which run up far into the inner recesses of the sacred fatherland. Shall he turn the helm that way? He pauses; for the navigation is difficult. One must be greatly expert to thread the streams which descend from the sunny fountains. It is not given even to all saints to follow safely all the windings of the rivers of delight. Paul had been with his brethren at sea in the place where the Lord sank all their transgressions in the depths, and he had been with them in sore affliction when neither sun nor moon appeared, and in all such seafaring he was in his element; but, brave pilot as he was, he could not pretend to penetrate all the richer and rarer experiences which bring elect souls nearest to the heart of the great Father; and therefore, instead of offering to be their pilot, he bowed his head, and prayed, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

The special entrance into the goodly land, which the apostle desired for his friends, was one which mere insight, wit, knowledge, or instruction could never give them. If so, he would have directed their minds that way at once. But the perception of the heavenlies is only given to heavenly faculties. The attainments which Paul desired for his friends were not beliefs of the head, but indwellings of the heart. To return to our figure of sailing up the creeks and rivers into the centre of the glorious country—that delicious voyage was only possible to the more refined and spiritual powers of the soul. Those sweet waters could

only be navigated by the heart, and the heart itself would need divine direction before it could find the entrance to them. There is a path which the vulture's eye has not seen, and the lion's whelp hath not trodden: only God seeth and knoweth it. The Beulah country of spiritual wisdom, especially in its higher reaches, is a matter for personal revelation from God to each one of his own. We are here hopelessly in the dark if we have no light from above; and even with that light we do but see the difficult nature of our way, and fail to enter upon it, until the light becomes a force, and he whom we desire to know directs our hearts into communion with himself. Yes, yonder are the radiant coasts, and the rivers of life up which our barque might sail into the centre of "the island of the innocent"; yet our great apostle does not rush into the office of pilot, but humbly acts as intercessor, crying, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God."

All this whets our desires! Who would not wish to go where only choice spirits can enter, and where these can only come as the Lord directs their hearts?

Paul could give his converts external directions, he could guide his more advanced brethren in the work, walk, and warfare of life; and he did so with all simplicity and earnestness. He urged them to abound in this grace, and to avoid that folly; but he felt that his exhortation would be inefficient unless their hearts were touched. Here he felt his own powerlessness, and so he cast the grand matter of heart-work upon the Lord himself. As the heart naturally baffles all physicians, so spiritually it is far beyond our knowledge. Who among ministers can guide you? Therefore may "the Lord direct your hearts."

God alone knows the heart, and God alone can rule it: for this ruling Paul makes request. "The Lord direct your hearts." Let us borrow his prayer, and turn it to our own personal use: "*Domine dirige nos.*"

The place for God in reference to the heart is that of supreme director. When the Lord lays his hand on the heart, which is the helm of the ship, then the whole vessel is rightly directed: this, therefore, is what we beseech him to do. When the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, and takes supreme control of the affections, then the whole life and conversation are after a godly sort. Oh, that he may prove this fact to each one of us! Some think much of liberty: I long far more to be in perfect subjection to the Lord my God. Oh, how I wish for a Master, a Dictator, a Director! Oh, that my Lord would take the reins, and bring my every thought into captivity to his own will, henceforth and for ever!

What a heavenly content I feel in yielding myself to the sacred Trinity! The God who made us may most fitly be called upon to govern us. When we recognize the glory of the whole Godhead, we perceive the perfect suitability of such direction as will come from the Three-One God. Albeit that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in this verse by name, yet he is mentioned by his operations, for it is the Spirit of God that deals with the hearts of believers. I take rare pleasure in our text, because we have the blessed Trinity in unity in these few words, "The Lord"—that is, the Holy Spirit who dwells within believers—"direct your hearts into the love of God (by whom I

understand the Father), and into the patient waiting for Christ." May the Trinity in Unity work with us, and fulfil in each of us this prayer of the apostle, that our hearts may be directed into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ!

Paul would have his Thessalonian friends advance in a straight line. Our heart is to be as a vessel that is not left to beat about, nor to come into harbour by a circuitous route; but is steered directly into the fair haven. May the Spirit of God take us and give us a straight tendency towards the holiest things, and then at once bring us into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

But here we must do a little translating or interpreting. Observe in the Revised Version a difference of translation. There we read "into the patience *of* Christ." This is a great improvement upon our former translation; but, although it is accurate, it is not complete: it does not take up the whole of the meaning. In our Authorized Version we have "the patient waiting for Christ," but in its margin we find "into the patience of Christ"; showing that the earlier translators felt that "the patience of Christ" would be a good translation; and yet, after considering it in all its bearings, they thought that Paul did not quite mean the patience *of Christ*, but that he meant a patience which we exert *towards Christ*. Is there not weight in this? Does not the context support it? As the love into which we are to be directed is love to God, so the patience into which we are to be directed must be a patience towards Christ. Our grand old translators expressed this truth by language which may be inaccurate as mere wording, but it is deeply correct as to its sense. Surely Paul did mean "the patience towards Christ which manifests itself in the patient waiting for Christ." If you consider all this, you will see that we have no infant-class lesson in the text before us! Here are nuts for young men who have cut their wisdom-teeth. May the good Spirit help us to reach the kernels.

Having turned the text over many times, I thought that we might be able to gather up a considerable amount of its real meaning if we thought of it thus: first, *here are two precious things for us to enter into*—the love of God and the patience of Christ; and, secondly, *here are two eminent virtues to be acquired by us:* the love of God, that is, love to God, and the patience of Christ—the patient waiting for Christ.

I. To begin, then, here are TWO PRECIOUS THINGS FOR US TO ENTER INTO. We cannot enter into them except as the Lord directs our hearts. There is a straight entrance into them, but we do not readily find it. It needs the Holy Spirit to direct our feet along the narrow way which leads to this great blessedness.

The first precious thing which we are to enter is *the love of God.* Beloved, we know the love of God in various ways. Many know it by having heard of it, even as a blind man may thus know the charms of an Alpine landscape. Poor knowledge this! Others of us have tasted of the love of God, have talked about the love of God, have prayed, and have sung concerning the love of God. All very well, but Paul meant a dove of a brighter feather. To be directed into the love of God is quite another thing from all that we can be told of it. A fair garden is before us. We look over the wall, and are even

allowed to stand at the door, while one handeth out to us baskets of golden apples. This is very delightful. Who would not be glad to come so near as this to the garden of heavenly delights? Yet it is something more to be shown the door, to have the latch lifted, to see the gateway opened, and to be gently directed into the Paradise of God. This is what is wanted—that we may be directed *into* the love of God. Oh, that we may feel something of it while we meditate upon it!

Beloved, we come, when we are taught of the Spirit of God, to *enter into the love of God by seeing its central importance*. We see that the love of God is the source and centre, fountain and foundation of all our salvation, and of all else that we receive from God. At the first we are much taken up with pardoning grace. We are largely engrossed with those royal robes of righteousness with which our nakedness is covered. We are delighted with the viands of the marriage banquet: we eat the fat and we drink the sweet. What else would you expect from starving souls admitted to the abundant supplies of heavenly grace? Afterwards we begin more distinctly to think of the love that spread the feast, the love that provided the raiment, the love that invited us to the banquet, and gently led us to take our place in it. This does not always come at first; but I pray that none of us may be long receiving the gifts of love without kissing the hand of love; that none of us may be content to have had much forgiven without coming and washing the feet of our forgiving Lord with our tears, and declaring our deep and true love to him. O saved soul, may the Lord fill thee with personal love to that personal Saviour, through whom all blessings come to thee! Remember, thou hast all good things because God loveth thee! Remember that every cake of the heavenly manna, every cup of the living water, comes to thee because of his great love wherewith he loved thee. This will put a sweetness into what thou receivest even greater than that which is there intrinsically, sweet though God's mercies be in their own nature and quality. Oh, to enter into God's love by perceiving it to be the well-head of every stream of mercy by which we are refreshed!

If we further enter into the love of God, we see its immeasurable greatness. There is a little word which you have often heard, which I beg to bring before you again—that little word "so." "God *so* loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Come, ye surveyors, bring your chains, and try to make a survey of this word "so." Nay, that is not enough. Come hither, ye that make our national surveys, and lay down charts for all nations. Come, ye who map the sea and land, and make a chart of this word "so." Nay, I must go further. Come hither, ye astronomers, that with your optic glasses spy out spaces before which imagination staggers, come hither and encounter calculations worthy of all your powers! When you have measured between the horns of space, here is a task that will defy you—"God *so* loved the world." If you enter into *that*, you will know that all this love is to you—that while Jehovah loves the world, yet he loves you as much as if there were nobody else in all the world to love. God can pour the infinite love of his heart

upon one object, and yet, for all that, can love ten thousand times ten thousand of his creatures just as much. O heir of God, thy store of love is not diminished because the innumerable company of thy brethren share it with thee! Thy Father loves each child as well as if he had no other. Peer into this abyss of love. Plunge into this sea. Dive into this depth unsearchable. Oh, that God might direct you into the immeasurable greatness of this love!

Neither be thou afraid to enter into this love by remembering its antiquity. Some fight shy of the great truth of the eternal electing love of God; but to me it is as wafers made with honey. What music lies in that sentence—"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love"! When this great world, the sun, and moon, and stars, had not yet flashed the morning of their little day, the Lord Jehovah loved his people with an everlasting love. In the divine purposes, which were not of yesterday, nor even of that date of which Scripture speaks as "In the beginning," when the Lord created the heavens and the earth, God loved his own people. He had chosen you, thought of you, provided for you, and made ten thousand forecasts of lovingkindness towards you, or ever the earth was. Beloved believer, you were graven on the hands of Christ even then. Oh, that the Lord would direct you into the antiquity of his love. It shall make you greatly prize that love to think that it had no beginning, and shall never, never have an end.

Again, I pray that we may be directed into the love of God as to *its infallible constancy.* The unchangeable Jehovah never ceases to love his people. It would be a wretched business to be directed into the love of God only to find it a thing of the past. O believing soul, thou hast not to deal with things which once were gems of the mine, but now are dreams of the night. Oh, no! the love of God abides for ever the same. When thou art in darkness the Lord still sees thee with an eye of love.

> "He saw thee ruined in the fall,
> Yet loved thee notwithstanding all."

When thou wast without strength, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Since thou hast known him he has never varied in his love. When thou hast grown cold he has loved thee; when thou hast grown cruel he has loved thee. Thou hast grievously provoked him till he has taken down his rod, and made thee smart; but he has loved thee in the smiting. With God there is as much love in chastening as in caressing. He never abates in fervour towards his ancient friends. Has he not said, "I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"? I pray the Lord to direct us into the immutability of his divine love, for this is a great holdfast in the day of soul-trouble. When conscious of imperfection, when darkened by the shadow of a great fault, when trembling under apprehension of wrath, it draws you back again if you can feel, "Still my Father is my Father, still will he receive his wandering child, and press his prodigal to his bosom, and rejoice over me, and say, 'This my son was dead, and is alive again.'" O child of God, thy questionings of divine love are grievous to thy God; but if thou canst learn this truth and

be led into it—that he loves thee evermore the same—it will help thee right graciously.

This love we ought to know, and if the Lord will lead us into it we shall know, that it is *omnipresent*. I mean by this, that whatever condition we may be in, the Lord is still active in love towards us. Thou art going across the sea to a far country, but thy Father's love will be as near thee on the blue wave as on the greensward of Old England. Thou hast come out to-night alone: time was when thou didst come to the house of God in company; but it may be that graves and desertions furnish sad reasons for thy present solitude. Still, thou art not alone, thy Father's love is with thee. Thou art to-night, perhaps, in a very strange part of thy spiritual experience: thou hast not gone this way heretofore. But the road is not new to eternal love. Go where thou mayest, the air is still about thee: go where thou mayest, thy Father's love is all around thee. Higher than thy soarings, deeper than thy sinkings, is all-surrounding love. Thou art going home, perhaps to a bed, from which thou shalt not rise for months. Thou hast no apprehension just now of what lies before thee in the immediate future. It is as well thou shouldst not know. I should be slow to lift the curtain of merciful concealment even if it were in my power to do so. There is no necessity to know details when one or two grand facts provide for all contingencies. Trouble not thyself about the morrow. If thou art to be sick, or if thou art to die, thy Father's love will be with thee still. Therefore go on, and fear not. He cannot, will not, turn away from thee. An omnipresent God means omnipresent love, and omnipotence goes hand-in-hand with omnipresence. The Lord will show himself strong on the behalf of them that trust him. His love, which never fails, is attended by a power that fainteth not, neither is weary. Oh, may the Lord lead you into such love as this! May the Holy Ghost lead you into the innermost secret of this joy of joys, this bliss unspeakable!

And I would also wish that you may be directed into the love of God as to its *entire agreement with his justice*, *his holiness*, *his spotless purity*. I firmly believe that God loves sinners, but I am equally sure that he hates sin. I do believe that he delights in mercy, but I am equally clear that he never dishonours his justice, nor frustrates the sternest threatening of his law. It is our joy that a holy God loves us, and does not find it needful to stain his holiness to save the unclean. We are loved by one so just, so righteous, that he could not pardon us without atonement. Even to-day he will never spare our sins, but he will drive the love of them out of us by chastisement, even as he has washed the guilt of them away by the precious blood of his dear Son. O beloved, we have a holy God, who is determined to make us holy. He would have us love our wives; and he sets before us a holy model—"Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." All true love goes towards purification; and the true love of God goes that way with an invincible current, that can never be turned aside. O believer, thy God loves thee so well that he will not let a darling sin stay in thy heart; he loves thee so strongly that he will not spare any iniquity in thee. "You only

have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Out of his pure love he will chasten and refine till he has made us pure and able to abide in fellowship with his perfect nature.

I have thus spoken a little upon a vast theme. I fear it will seem to you mere surface-work; and yet I pray that it may lead you to deep knowledge of divine things, so that you may apprehend God's love as yours, and then may feel the power, the unction, the savour, which come out of his love, making all your heart as sweet and aromatic as a chamber in which a box of precious ointment has been broken. Oh, that you might be led into the innermost secret of the Lord's love till it shall saturate you, influence you, take possession of you, carry you right away! The Lord direct you into the love of God.

The second part of the prayer upon which we shall have to dwell is, "*The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ.*" Now, beloved, I have another great sea before me, and who am I that I should act as your convoy over this main ocean? Here I am lost. I cannot take my bearings. I am a lone speck upon the infinite. I will imitate the wise apostle, and pray, "The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ."

What a patience that was which Jesus exhibited for us in our redemption! To come from heaven to earth, to dwell in poverty and neglect, and find no room even in the inn! Admire the patience of Bethlehem. To hold his tongue for thirty years—who shall estimate the wonderful patience of Nazareth and the carpenter's shop! When he spoke, to be despised and rejected of men, what patience for him whom Cherubim obey! Oh, the patience of the Christ to be tempted of the devil! One can hardly tell what patience Christ must have had to let the devil come within ten thousand miles of him, for he was able to keep him far down in the abyss below his feet. There is not much in a patience which cannot help itself; but you well know that all the while Christ could have conquered all foes, chased away all suffering, and kept off all temptation; but for our sakes, as Captain of our salvation, that he might be made perfect through suffering, his patience had its perfect work, right on to Gethsemane. Do you need that I tell you this? Golgotha, with all its woes, its "*lama sabachthani*," its abysmal griefs, do I need remind you of the patience of Christ for us when the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all? Patient as a lamb, he opened not his mouth, but stood in omnipotence of patience, all-sufficient to endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, but ye have need to enter into the patience of Jesus.

Oh, the patience *within Christ himself!* God never seems so like a God as when he divinely rules himself. I can understand his shaking earth and heaven with his word; but that he should possess his own soul in patience is far more incomprehensible. Marvel that omnipotent love should restrain omnipotence itself. In the life and death of our Lord Jesus we see almighty patience. He was very sensitive—very sensitive of sin, very sensitive of unkindness, and yet with all that sensitiveness he showed no petulance, but bore himself in all the calm

grandeur of Godhead. He was not quick to resent an ill, but he was patient to the uttermost. As I have said before, there went with his sensitiveness the power at any time to avenge himself and deliver himself, but he would not use it. Legions of angels would have been glad to come to his rescue, but he bowed alone in the garden, and gave himself up to the betrayer without a word. And all the while he was most tender and graciously considerate of everybody but himself. He spoke burning words sometimes: his mouth could be like the red lips of a volcano as he poured out the burning lava of denunciation upon "scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites"; but the resentment was never aroused by any injury done to himself. When he looked that way it was always gentleness: he cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Oh, the wondrous patience of heaven's own Christ!

Enter into his patience *with us* as well as *for* us. How he put up with each one of us when we would not come to him! How he wept over us when we neglected him! How he drew us with constancy of love when we tugged against the cords! And when we came to him, and since we have been with him, what patience he has had with our ill-manners! If I had been Christ, I would have discharged such a servant as I have been long ago. Often have I gone to his feet, and cried,

"Dismiss me not thy service, Lord."

I knew how justly he might have stripped his livery from my back; but he has not done so. Have you not often wondered that he should still love you? He is affianced to you, and he hateth putting away; but is it not marvellous that he keeps his troth with you, and will do so, though you have often defiled yourself, and forgotten him? Blessed fact, the ring is on *his* finger rather than on yours, and the marriage is as sure as his love. He will present you unto himself, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," one of these days. But oh! his patience with each one of us. How he has put up with our unbelief, our mistrust, our hard hearts, our indifference, our strange ways! Never lover so kind as he! On our part never return so unworthy. Blessed be the patience of our Best Beloved!

Now, beloved, what is wanted is that we be directed into this patience of Christ. The choicest saints in different ages of the world have studied most the passion of our Lord; and although nowadays we hear from the wise men that it is sensuous to talk about the cross and the five wounds, and so forth, for my part I feel that no contemplation ever does me so much real benefit as that which brings me very near my bleeding Lord. The cross for me! The cross for me! Here is doctrine humbling, softening, melting, elevating, sanctifying. Here is truth that is of heaven, and yet comes down to earth: love that lifts me away from earth even to the seventh heaven. Have you ever read the words of holy Bernard, when his soul was all on fire with love of that dear name of which he so sweetly sang,

"Jesus the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast."

Why, Bernard is poet, philosopher, and divine, and yet a child in love. Have you studied Rutherford's letters and the wondrous things which he says about his own dear Lord? For an hour at glory's gate commend me to heavenly Master Rutherford. Have you never held fellowship with George Herbert, that saintly songster? Hear him as he cries,

> "How sweetly doth *my Master* sound! *My Master!*
> As ambergris leaves a rich scent
> Unto the taster,
> So do these words a sweet content,
> An oriental fragrancy, *My Master!*"

O friends, I can wish you no greater blessing than to be directed into these two things—the love of God, and the patience of your Saviour. Enter both at the same time. You cannot divide them; why should you? The love of God shines best in the patience of the Saviour; and what is the patience of Christ but the love of the Father? "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." May the Lord lead us into both of them at this hour, and continue upon us the heavenly process all the rest of our lives, in all experiences of sorrow and of rapture, and in all moods and growths of our spirit!

II. But now I must ask your attention for the few minutes that remain to me to what is, perhaps, still the real gist of the text: HERE ARE TWO EMINENT VIRTUES TO BE ACQUIRED.

"The Lord direct your hearts into *the love of God*." Beloved, let the love of God to you flow into your hearts, and abide there till it settles down, and bears on its surface the cream of love to God, yielded by your own heart. The only way to love God is to let God's love to you dwell in your soul till it transforms your soul into itself. Love *to* God grows out of the love *of* God.

Well, now, concerning love to God: if you receive it fully into your souls *it will nourish the contemplative life*. You will want to be alone. You will prefer to sit silently at Jesus' feet, while others wrangle over the little politics of the house. You will give up being busy-bodies, talking in six peoples' houses in an hour: quietude will charm you. You will love no company so much as the society of him who is the Best and the Most. To be with God in quiet will be your highest enjoyment. You will not say, as some do, "I must have recreation." Contemplation of God is recreation to the child of God. It creates the soul anew; and is not this the truest re-creation? Whenever God's creation in us seems to have grown a little dim, love to God will gender and nourish the contemplative life, and so make us come forth as new creatures, fresh from our Maker's holy hand.

It will also animate the active life if you love God. You will feel that you must yield fruit unto your Lord. Your soul, when full of the love of God, will cry, "I must go after the wanderer; I must care for the poor; I must teach the ignorant." You cannot love God and be lazy. Love to God will stir you up. Contemplation teaches you to sit still, and this is no trifling lesson; but after sitting still, you rise with greater energy to go about the one thing needful, namely, the service of your Lord's love.

Love to God will also arouse enthusiasm. We want more persons in the church who will be a little daring—rash men and women who will do things which nobody else would think of doing, such as will make their prudent friends hold up their hands and say, "How could you? If you had consulted with me, I could have given you many a wise hint as to how it ought to have been done." This has been my lot of late. I have been surfeited with notions as to how I should have acted. Yes, my friend, I know you of old. You have wisdom at your fingers' ends. But let me quietly whisper that you would have done nothing at all; you would have been too anxious to save yourself from trouble. It is an easy thing to tell a man how he ought to have done it; and yet that man perhaps may be suffering intensely for having done bravely a well-meant deed. Instead of your showing sympathy with him, you treat him to the remark, "It might have been done better in another way." There was never a child that was near drowning but what the man that plunged in and drew him out of the river ought to have done it in a better way. He wetted himself too much; he waited too long; or he handled the drowning one too roughly. Alas, for silly criticisms of gracious deeds! If you come to love God with all consuming zeal, you will not be hindered by criticisms. You will testify for Jesus freely, because you cannot help yourself. It has to be done: somebody has to sacrifice himself to do it, and you say to yourself, "Here am I, Lord; send me. At every risk or hazard, send me. For thy dear love's sake I count it joy to suffer shame or loss. I count it life to suffer death that I may honour thee." Love to God will arouse enthusiasm.

It will also stimulate holy desire. They that love God can never have enough of him—certainly never too much. Sometimes they are found pining after him. When we love the Lord, we chide the laggard hours which keep us from his coming. Time has not wings enough.

> "My heart is with him on his throne,
> And ill can brook delay,
> Each moment listening for the voice,
> 'Rise up, and come away.'"

A heavenly love-sickness sometimes makes God's handmaids swoon; for they long to see the Beloved face to face, and to be like him, and to be with him where he is. The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God in some such fashion as this; for it will make you sit loose by all things here below. Do you never feel that your wings are growing? Do you never sigh, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest"?

And this love, better still, *will transform the character.* It is wonderful what a difference love makes in the person that is possessed with it. A poor timid hen that will fly away from every passer-by, loves its offspring, and when it has its chicks about it, it will fight like a very griffin for its young. And when the love of Christ comes into a timid believer, how it changes him! It takes the love of sin away, and implants a sublime nature. God only knows what a mortal man can yet become. Of women sunken in sin, what saints the Lord has made when he has filled them with his love! When the sun shines

on a bit of glass bottle far away, it flashes like a diamond. A little fleecy vapour in the sky rivals an angel's wing when the sun pours itself upon it. Our Lord can put so much of himself, by means of his love, into the hearts of his people, that they may be mistaken for himself. John made a blunder in heaven, and fell at the feet of one of his brethren the prophets; for he had come to be so much like his Lord, that John could hardly tell the one from the other. Had he forgotten that word, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"? It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but love is the transfiguring power in the hand of the Holy Spirit. If the heart be directed into the love of Christ, it is on the highway to holiness.

Lastly—I am sorry that time will fly so fast just now—we want our hearts to be directed into *patience towards Christ*. What a subject is this! Beloved, if our heart is directed into patience towards Christ, we shall suffer in patience for our Lord's sake, and we shall not complain. Those about us will say, "It is wonderful how resigned he seems"; or, "How gladly she bears grief for love of Christ!" And if it be the suffering of reproach and scorn for Jesus' sake, if we are directed into the patience of Christ, it will not seem to be any trouble at all. We shall bear it calmly, and in our hearts we shall laugh at those who laugh at us for Jesus' sake.

Yet it is not all patience of suffering that we want. We want the patience of forbearing. We must learn not to answer those who blaspheme. "Bear, and forbear, and silent be." Chew the cud in peace. Put up with much. When reviled, revile not again. The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ.

We shall also want the patience of working—working on when nothing comes of it—pleading on with souls that are not converted—preaching when preaching seems to have no effect—teaching when the children do not care to learn. We need the patience of Christ, who set his face like a flint, and would accomplish his work cost what it may. He never turned aside from it for a moment. The Lord direct our hearts into patient working.

Then there is the patience of watching in prayer—not giving it up because you have not received an answer. What? Did a friend say she had prayed for seventeen years for a certain mercy, and now meant to ask it no more? Sister, make it eighteen years, and when you have got to the end of eighteen make it nineteen. May the Lord direct our hearts into the patience of Christ in prayer! We long kept him waiting: we need not complain if he makes us tarry his leisure. Still believe; still hope; still wrestle, until the break of day.

Pray for the patience of waiting his will, saying, "Let him do what seemeth him good." Though it be for months, for years, wait on. Christ is glorified by our patience. Depend on it, the best way in which certain of us can extol him is by letting him have his way with us. Even though he plunge me into seven boiling caldrons one after the other, I will say: Let him do what he wills with his own, and I am his own. I am sure that he does not make the furnace one degree too hot. If he means to give his servant ten troubles, let his heavy hand fall even to the tenth, if so he pleases.

We want to be directed into patience towards Christ, and especially in patience in *waiting for his coming*. That, no doubt, is very justly inferred, and so it is put in our translation very prominently: "Patient waiting for Christ." He will come, brothers; he will come, sisters. It is true the interpreters of the Book of Revelation told us that he was to come three hundred years ago, and there are thousands upon thousands of books in the British Museum which were very dogmatic upon this point, and yet they have all been disproved by the lapse of time. Men were as sure as sure could be that Christ would come just then; *and he did not*, for he was bound by his Word, but not by their interpretation of it. He will come at the appointed hour. To the jots and tittles God's word will stand. He will come to the tick of the clock. We know not when; we need not ask; but let us *wait*.

Just now some of you may be, as I am, troubled because the Lord does not yet appear to vindicate his cause; and there is noise and triumph among the priests of Baal. The Lord direct our hearts into the patience of Christ. It is all right. Clouds gather; the darkness becomes more dense. The thunder rolls; friends flee in confusion. What next? Well, perhaps, before we have hardly time for dread, silver drops of gracious rain may fall, and the sun may break through the clouds, and we may say to ourselves, "Who would have thought it?"

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

May the Lord direct each one of us into the patient waiting for Christ!

I am sorry, very sorry, that there are persons here to whom all this must seem a strange lot of talk. They know nothing about it. Dear souls, you cannot at present know anything about it. You must first be born again. A total change of heart must come over you before you can enter into the love of God or the patience of Christ. May that change take place to-night, before you go to sleep! If the Lord shall lead you to seek his face, this is the way to seek it: *trust his dear Son*. Lifted on the cross is Jesus Christ, the great Propitiation for sin. Look to him, and looking alone to him, you shall be saved. He will give you the new heart and the right spirit with which you shall be enabled to enter into the love of God and the patience of Christ. The Lord direct you at this very hour, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Thess. ii., iii. 1—5.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—788, 766, 769.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"LET HIM DELIVER HIM NOW."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 17TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God."—Matthew xxvii. 43.

THESE words are a fulfilment of the prophecy contained in the twenty-second Psalm. Read from the seventh verse—"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Thus to the letter doth our Lord answer to the ancient prophecy.

It is very painful to the heart to picture our blessed Master in his death-agonies, surrounded by a ribald multitude, who watched him and mocked him, made sport of his prayer and insulted his faith. Nothing was sacred to them: they invaded the Holy of holies of his confidence in God, and taunted him concerning that faith in Jehovah which they were compelled to admit. See, dear friends, what an evil thing is sin, since the Sin-bearer suffers so bitterly to make atonement for it! See, also, the shame of sin, since even the Prince of Glory, when bearing the consequences of it, is covered with contempt! Behold, also, how he loved us! For our sake he "endured the cross, despising the shame." He loved us so much that even scorn of the most cruel sort he deigned to bear, that he might take away our shame and enable us to look up unto God.

Beloved, the treatment of our Lord Jesus Christ by men is the clearest proof of total depravity which can possibly be required or discovered. Those must be stony hearts indeed which can laugh at a dying Saviour, and mock even at his faith in God! Compassion would seem to have deserted humanity, while malice sat supreme on the throne. Painful as the picture is, it will do you good to paint it. You will need neither canvas, nor brush, nor palette, nor colours. Let your thoughts draw the outline, and your love fill in the detail; I shall not complain if imagination heightens the colouring. The Son of God, whom angels adore with veiled faces, is pointed at with scornful fingers by men who thrust out the tongue and mockingly exclaim,

"He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

While thus we see our Lord in his sorrow and his shame as our substitute, we must not forget that he also is there as our representative. That which appears in many a psalm to relate to David is found in the Gospels to refer to Jesus, our Lord. Often and often the student of the Psalm will say to himself, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?" He will have to disentangle the threads sometimes, and mark off that which belongs to David and that which relates to the Son of God; and frequently he will not be able to disentangle the threads at all, because they are one, and may relate both to David, and to David's Lord. This is meant to show us that the life of Christ is an epitome of the life of his people. He not only suffers for us as our substitute, but he suffers before us as our pattern. In him we see what we have in our measure to endure. "As he is, so are we also in this world." We also must be crucified to the world, and we may look for somewhat of those tests of faith and taunts of derision which go with such a crucifixion. "Marvel not if the world hate you." You, too, must suffer without the gate. Not for the world's redemption, but for the accomplishment of divine purposes in you, and through you to the sons of men, you must be made to know the cross and its shame. Christ is the mirror of the church. What the head endured every member of the body will also have to endure in its measure. Let us read the text in this light, and come to it saying to ourselves, "Here we see what Jesus suffered in our stead, and we learn hereby to love him with all our souls. Here, too, we see, as in a prophecy, how great things we are to suffer for his sake at the hands of men." May the Holy Spirit help us in our meditation, so that at the close of it we may more ardently love our Lord, who suffered for us, and may the more carefully arm ourselves with the same mind which enabled him to endure such contradiction of sinners against himself.

Coming at once to the text, first, *observe the acknowledgment* with which the text begins: "He trusted in God." The enemies of Christ admitted his faith in God. Secondly, consider *the test which is the essence of the taunt:* "Let him deliver him, if he will have him." When we have taken those two things into our minds, then let us for a while consider *the answer* to that test and taunt: God does assuredly deliver his people: those who trust in him have no reason to be ashamed of their faith.

I. First, then, my beloved brethren, you who know the Lord by faith and live by trusting in him, let me invite you to OBSERVE THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT which these mockers made of our Lord's faith: "He trusted in God." Yet the Saviour did not wear any peculiar garb or token by which he let men know that he trusted in God. He was not a recluse, neither did he join some little knot of separatists, who boasted their peculiar trust in Jehovah. Although our Saviour was separate from sinners, yet he was eminently a man among men, and he went in and out among the multitude as one of themselves. His one peculiarity was that "he trusted in God." He was so perfectly a man that, although he was undoubtedly a Jew, there were no Jewish peculiarities about him. Any nation might claim him; but no nation

could monopolize him. The characteristics of our humanity are so palpably about him that he belongs to all mankind. I admire the Welch sister who was of opinion that the Lord Jesus must be Welch. When they asked her how she proved it, she said that he always spoke to her heart in Welch. Doubtless it was so, and I can, with equal warmth, declare that he always speaks to me in English. Brethren from Germany, France, Sweden, Italy—you all claim that he speaks to you in your own tongue. This was the one thing which distinguished him among men—"he trusted in God," and he lived such a life as naturally grows out of faith in the Eternal Lord. This peculiarity had been visible even to that ungodly multitude who least of all cared to perceive a spiritual point of character. Was ever any other upon a cross thus saluted by the mob who watched his execution? Had these scorners ever mocked anyone before for such a matter as this? I trow not. Yet faith had been so manifest in our Lord's daily life that the crowd cried out aloud, "He trusted in God."

How did they know? I suppose they could not help seeing that *he made much of God* in his teaching, in his life, and in his miracles. Whenever Jesus spoke it was always godly talk; and if it was not always distinctly about God, it was always about things that related to God, that came from God, that led to God, that magnified God. A man may be fairly judged by that which he makes most of. The ruling passion is a fair gauge of the heart. What a soul-ruler faith is! It sways the man as the rudder guides the ship. When a man once gets to live by faith in God, it tinctures his thoughts, it masters his purposes, it flavours his words, it puts a tone into his actions, and it comes out in everything by ways and means most natural and unconstrained, till men perceive that they have to do with a man who makes much of God. The unbelieving world says outright that there is no God, and the less impudent, who admit his existence, put him down at a very low figure, so low that it does not affect their calculations; but to the true Christian, God is not only much, but all. To our Lord Jesus, God was all in all; and when you come to estimate God as he did, then the most careless onlooker will soon begin to say of you, "He trusted in God."

In addition to observing that Jesus made much of God, men came to note that he was *a trusting man, and not self-confident.* Certain persons are very proud because they are self-made men. I will do them the credit to admit that they heartily worship their maker. Self made them, and they worship self. We have among us individuals who are self-sufficient, and almost all-sufficient; they sneer at those who do not succeed, for *they* can succeed anywhere at anything The world to them is a football which they can kick where they like. If they do not rise to the very highest eminence it is simply out of pity to the rest of us, who ought to have a chance. A vat of sufficiency ferments within their ribs! There was nothing of that sort of thing in our Lord. Those who watched him did not say that he had great self-reliance and a noble spirit of self-confidence. No, no! They said, "He trusted in God." Indeed it was so. The words that he spake he spake not of himself, and the great deeds that he did he never

boasted of, but said "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." He was a truster in God, not a boaster in self. Brethren and sisters, I desire that you and I may be just of that order. Self-confidence is the death of confidence in God; reliance upon talent, tact, experience, and things of that kind, kills faith. Oh that we may know what faith means, and so look out of ourselves and quit the evil confidence which looks within!

On the other hand, we may wisely remember that, while our Lord Jesus was not self-reliant, *he trusted, and was by no means despondent:* he was never discouraged. He neither questioned his commission, nor despaired of fulfilling it. He never said, "I must give it up: I can never succeed." No; "He trusted in God." And this is a grand point in the working of faith, that while it keeps us from self-conceit, it equally preserves us from enfeebling fear. When our blessed Lord set his face like a flint; when, being baffled, he returned to the conflict; when, being betrayed, he still persevered in his love, then men could not help seeing that he trusted in God. His faith was not mere repetition of a creed, or profession of belief, but it was childlike reliance upon the Most High. May ours be of the same order!

It is evident that the Lord Jesus *trusted in God openly*, since even yonder gibing crowd proclaimed it. Some good people try to exercise faith on the sly: they practise it in snug corners, and in lonely hours, but they are afraid to say much before others, for fear their faith should not see the promise fulfilled. They dare not say, with David, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." This secrecy robs God of his honour. Brethren, we do not glorify our God as he ought to be glorified. Let us trust in him, and own it. Wherefore should we be ashamed? Let us throw down the gauge of battle to earth and hell. God, the true and faithful, deserves to be trusted without limit. Trust your all with him, and be not ashamed of having done so. Our Saviour was not ashamed of trusting in his God. On the cross he cried, "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breast." Jesus lived by faith. We are sure that he did, for in the Epistle to the Hebrews he is quoted as saying, "I will put my trust in him." If so glorious a personage as the only begotten Son of God lived here by faith in God, how are you and I to live except by trust in God? If we live unto God, this is the absolute necessity of our spiritual life: "the just shall live by faith." Shall we be ashamed of that which brings life to us? The cruel ones who saw Jesus die did not say, "He now and then trusted in God"; nor "he trusted in the Lord years ago"; but they admitted that faith in God was the constant tenor of his life: they could not deny it. Even though, with malicious cruelty, they turned it into a taunt, yet they did not cast a question upon the fact that "he trusted in God." Oh, I want you so to live that those who dislike you most may, nevertheless, know that you do trust in God! When you come to die, may your dear children say of you, "Our dear mother did trust in the Lord"! May that boy, who has gone furthest away from Christ, and grieved your heart the most, nevertheless say in his heart, "There may be hypocrites in the world, but my dear father does truly trust in God"! Oh, that our faith may be known unmistakably!

We do not wish it to be advertised to our own honour. That be far from our minds. But yet we would have it known that others may be encouraged, and that God may be glorified. If nobody else trusts in God, let us do so; and thus may we uplift a testimony to the honour of his faithfulness. When we die, may this be our epitaph—"He trusted in God."

David, in the twenty-second Psalm, represents the enemies as saying of our Lord—"He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." This *practical faith* is sure to be known wherever it is in operation, because it is exceedingly rare. Multitudes of people have a kind of faith in God, but it does not come to the practical point of trusting that God will deliver them. I see upon the newspaper placards, "*Startling News! People in the Planets!*" Not a very practical discovery. For many a day there has been a tendency to refer God's promises and our faith to the planets, or somewhere beyond this present every-day life. We say to ourselves, "Oh yes, God delivers his people." We mean that he did so in the days of Moses, and possibly he may be doing so now in some obscure island of the sea. Ah me! The glory of faith lies in its being fit for every-day wear. Can it be said of you, "He trusted in God, that he would deliver him"? Have you faith of the kind which will make you lean upon the Lord in poverty, in sickness, in bereavement, in persecution, in slander, in contempt? Have you a trust in God to bear you up in holy living at all costs, and in active service even beyond your strength? Can you trust in God definitely about this and that? Can you trust about food, and raiment, and home? Can you trust God even about your shoes, that they shall be iron and brass, and about the hairs of your head that they are all numbered? What we need is less theory and more actual trust in God.

The faith of the text was personal: "that he would *deliver him.*" Blessed is that faith which can reach its arm of compassion around the world, but that faith must begin at home. Of what use were the longest arm if it were not fixed to the man himself at the shoulder? If you have no faith about yourself, what faith can you have about others? "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." Come, beloved, have you such a faith in the living God? Do you trust in God through Christ Jesus that he will save you? Yes, you poor, unworthy one, the Lord will deliver you if you trust him. Yes, poor woman, or unknown man, the Lord can help you in your present trouble, and in every other, and he will do so if you trust him to that end. May the Holy Spirit lead you to first trust the Lord Jesus for the pardon of sin, and then to trust in God for all things.

Let us pause a minute. Let a man trust in God; not in fiction but in fact, and he will find that he has solid rock under his feet. Let him trust about his own daily needs and trials, and rest assured that the Lord will actually appear for him, and he will not be disappointed. Such a trust in God is a very *reasonable* thing; its absence is most unreasonable. If there be a God, he knows all about my case. If he made my ear he can hear me; if he made my eye he can see me; and therefore he perceives my condition. If he be my Father, as he says he is, he will certainly care for me, and will help me in my hour

of need if he can. We are sure that he can, for he is omnipotent. Is there anything unreasonable, then, in trusting in God that he will deliver us? I venture to say that if all the forces in the universe were put together, and all the kindly intents of all who are our friends were put together, and we were then to rely upon those united forces and intents, we should not have a thousandth part so much justification for our confidence as when we depend upon God, whose intents and forces are infinitely greater than those of all the world beside. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." If you view things in the white light of pure reason, it is infinitely more reasonable to trust in the living God than in all his creatures put together.

Certainly, dear friends, it is extremely *comfortable* to trust in God. I find it so, and therefore speak. To roll your burden upon the Lord, since he will sustain you, is a blessed way of being quit of care. We know him to be faithful, and as powerful as he is faithful; and our dependence upon him is the solid foundation of a profound peace.

While it is comfortable, it is also *uplifting*. If you trust in men, the best of men, you are likely to be lowered by your trust. We are apt to cringe before those who patronize us. If your prosperity depends upon a person's smile, you are tempted to pay homage even when it is undeserved. The old saying mentions a certain person as "knowing on which side his bread is buttered." Thousands are practically degraded by their trusting in men. But when our reliance is upon the living God we are raised by it, and elevated both morally and spiritually. You may bow in deepest reverence before God, and yet there will be no fawning. You may lie in the dust before the Majesty of heaven, and yet not be dishonoured by your humility; in fact, it is our greatness to be nothing in the presence of the Most High.

This confidence in God makes men *strong*. I should advise the enemy not to oppose the man who trusts in God. In the long run he will be beaten, as Haman found it with Mordecai. He had been warned of this by Zeresh, his wife, and his wise men, who said, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." Contend not with a man who has God at his back. Years ago the Mentonese desired to break away from the dominion of the Prince of Monaco. They therefore drove out his agent. The prince came with his army, not a very great one, it is true, but still formidable to the Mentonese. I know not what the high and mighty princeling was not going to do; but the news came that the King of Sardinia was coming up in the rear to help the Mentonese, and therefore his lordship of Monaco very prudently retired to his own rock. When a believer stands out against evil he may be sure that the Lord of hosts will not be far away. The enemy shall hear the dash of his horse-hoof and the blast of his trumpet, and shall flee before him. Wherefore be of good courage, and compel the world to say of you, "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him."

II. Secondly, I want you to follow me briefly in considering THE

TEST WHICH IS THE ESSENCE OF THE TAUNT which was hurled by the mockers against our Lord—"Let him deliver him now, if he will have him."

Such a test will come to all believers. It may come as a taunt from enemies; it will certainly come as a trial of your faith. The arch-enemy will assuredly hiss out, "Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

This taunt has about it *the appearance of being very logical*, and indeed in a measure so it is. If God has promised to deliver us, and we have openly professed to believe the promise, it is only natural that others should say, "Let us see whether he does deliver him. This man believes that the Lord will help him; and he must help him, or else the man's faith is a delusion." This is the sort of test to which we ourselves would have put others before our conversion, and we cannot object to be proved in the same manner ourselves. Perhaps we incline to run away from the ordeal, but this very shrinking should be a solemn call to us to question the genuineness of that faith which we are afraid to test. "He trusted on the Lord," says the enemy, "that he would deliver him: let him deliver him"; and surely, however malicious the design, there is no escaping from the logic of the challenge.

It is peculiarly painful to have this stern inference driven home to you in the hour of sorrow. Because one cannot deny the fairness of the appeal, it is all the more trying. In the time of depression of spirit it is hard to have one's faith questioned, or the ground on which it stands made a matter of dispute. Either to be mistaken in one's belief, or to have no real faith, or to find the ground of one's faith fail is an exceedingly grievous thing. Yet as our Lord was not spared this painful ordeal, we must not expect to be kept clear of it, and Satan knows well how to work these questions, till the poison of them sets the blood on fire. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him;" he hurls this fiery dart into the soul, till the man is sorely wounded, and can scarcely hold his ground.

The taunt is specially *pointed and personal*. It is put thus: "*He* trusted on the Lord that he would deliver *him:* let him deliver *him*"; "Do not come to us with your fiddle-faddle about God's helping all his chosen. Here is a man who is one of his people, will he help *him?* Do not talk to us big things about Jehovah at the Red Sea, or in the Desert of Sinai, or God helping his people in ages past. Here is a living man before us who trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver *him* now." You know how Satan will pick out one of the most afflicted, and pointing his fingers at him will cry, "Let him deliver HIM." Brethren, the test is fair. God will be true to every believer. If any one child of God could be lost, it would be quite enough to enable the devil to spoil all the glory of God for ever. If one promise of God to one of his people should fail, that one failure would suffice to mar the veracity of the Lord to all eternity; they would publish it in the "Diabolical Gazette," and in every street of Tophet they would howl it out, "God has failed. God has broken his promise. God has ceased to be faithful to his people." It would then be a horrible reproach—"He trusted in God to deliver him, but he did not deliver him."

Much emphasis lies in its being *in the present tense:* "He trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver him *now*." I see Thee, O Lord Jesus, thou art not now in the wilderness, where the fiend is saying, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." No. Thou art nailed to the tree; thine enemies have hemmed thee in. The legionaries of Rome are at the foot of the cross, the scribes and Pharisees and raging Jews compass thee about. There is no escape from death for thee! Hence their cry —"Let him deliver him *now*." Ah, brothers and sisters! this is how Satan assails us, using our present and pressing tribulations as the barbs of his arrows. Yet here also there is reason and logic in the challenge.

If God does not deliver his servants at one time as well as another, he has not kept his promise. For a man of truth is always true, and a promise once given always stands. A promise cannot be broken now and then, and yet the honour of the person giving it be maintained by his keeping it at other times. The word of a true man stands always good: it is good *now*. This is logic, bitter logic, cold steel logic, logic which seems to cut right down your backbone and cleave your chine. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him now." Yet this hard logic can be turned to comfort. I told you a story the other day of the brother in Guy's Hospital to whom the doctors said that he must undergo an operation which was extremely dangerous. They gave him a week to consider whether he would submit to it. He was troubled for his young wife and children, and for his work for the Lord. A friend left a bunch of flowers for him, with this verse as its motto, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now." "Yes," he thought, "*now*." In prayer he cast himself upon the Lord, and felt in his heart, "Come on, doctors, I am ready for you." When the next morning came, he refused to take chloroform, for he desired to go to heaven in his senses. He bore the operation manfully, and he is yet alive. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him" then and there, and the Lord did so. In this lies the brunt of the battle.

A Christian man may be beaten in business, he may fail to meet all demands, and then Satan yells, "Let him deliver him *now*." The poor man has been out of work for two or three months, tramping the streets of London until he has worn out his boots; he has been brought to his last penny. I think I hear the laugh of the Prince of Darkness as he cries, "Let him deliver him *now*." Or else the believer is very ill in body, and low in spirit, and then Satan howls, "Let him deliver him *now*." Some of us have been in very trying positions. We were moved with indignation because of deadly error, and we spoke plainly, but men refused to hear. Those we relied upon deserted us; good men sought their own ease and would not march with us, and we had to bear testimony for despised truth alone, until we were ourselves despised. Then the adversary shouted, "Let him deliver him *now*." Be it so! We do not refuse the test. Our God whom we serve will deliver us. We will not bow down to modern thought nor worship the image which human wisdom has set up. Our God is God both of hills and of valleys. He will not fail his servants, albeit that for

a while he forbears that he may try their faith. We dare accept the test, and say, "Let him deliver us *now*."

Beloved friends, we need not be afraid of this taunt if it is brought by adversaries; for, after all, the test will come to us apart from any malice, for *it is inevitable*. All the faith you have will be tried. I can see you heaping it up. How rich you are! What a pile of faith! Friend, you are almost perfect! Open the furnace door and put the heap in. Do you shrink? See how it shrivels! Is there anything left? Bring hither a magnifying glass. Is this all that is left? Yes, this is all that remains of the heap. You say, "I trusted in God." Yes, but you had reason to cry, "Lord, help my unbelief." Brethren, we have not a tithe of the faith we think we have. But whether or not, all our faith must be tested. God builds no ships but what he sends to sea. In living, in losing, in working, in weeping, in suffering, or in striving, God will find a fitting crucible for every single grain of the precious faith which he has given us. Then he will come to us and say—You trusted in God that he would deliver you, and you shall be delivered now. How you will open your eyes as you see the Lord's hand of deliverance! What a man of wonders you will be when you tell in your riper years to the younger people how the Lord delivered you! Why, there are some Christians I know of who, like the ancient mariner, could detain even a wedding guest with their stories of God's wonders on the deep.

Yes, the test will come again and again. May the gibes of adversaries only make us ready for the sterner ordeals of the judgment to come. O my dear friends, examine your religion. You have a great deal of it, some of you; but what of its quality? Can your religion stand the test of poverty, and scandal, and scorn? Can it stand the test of scientific sarcasm and learned contempt? Will your religion stand the test of long sickness of body and depression of spirit caused by weakness? What are you doing amid the common trials of life? What will you do in the swellings of Jordan? Examine well your faith, since all hangs there. Some of us who have lain for weeks together, peering through the thin veil which parts us from the unseen, have been made to feel that nothing will suffice us but a promise which will answer the taunt, "Let him deliver us *now*."

III. I shall finish, in the third place, dear friends, by noticing THE ANSWER to the test. God does deliver those who trust in him. God's interposition for the faithful is not a dream, but a substantial reality. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." All history proves the faithfulness of God. Those who trust God have been in all sorts of troubles; but they have always been delivered. They have been bereaved. What a horrible bereavement was that which fell to the lot of Aaron, when his two sons were struck dead for their profanity in the presence of God! "And Aaron held his peace"! What grace was there! Thus will the Lord sustain you also should he take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke. Grave after grave has the good man visited till it seemed that his whole race was buried, and yet his heart has not been broken; but he has bowed his soul before the will of the ever-blessed One. Thus has the Lord delivered his afflicted one by sustaining him.

In other ways the bush has burned, and yet has not been consumed. Remember the multiplied and multiform trials of Job. Yet God sustained him to the end so that he did not charge God foolishly, but held fast his faith in the Most High. If ever you are called to the afflictions of Job you will also be called to the sustaining grace of Job. Some of God's servants have been defeated in their testimony. They have borne faithful witness for God, but they have been rejected of men. It has been their lot, like Cassandra, to prophesy the truth, but not to be believed. Such was Jeremiah, who was born to a heritage of scorn from those whose benefit he sought. Yet he was delivered. He shrank not from being faithful. His courage could not be silenced. By integrity he was delivered.

Godly men have been despised and misrepresented, and yet have been delivered. Remember David and his envious brethren, David and the malignant Saul, David when his men spake of stoning him. Yet he took off the giant's head; yet he came to the throne; yet the Lord built him a house.

Some of God's servants have been bitterly persecuted, but God has delivered them. Daniel came forth from the lions' den, and the three holy children from the midst of the burning fiery furnace. These are only one or two out of millions who trusted God and he delivered them. Out of all manner of ill the Lord delivered them. God brought this crowd of witnesses through all their trials unto his throne, where they rest with Jesus, and share the triumph of their Master at this very day. O my timid brother, nothing has happened to you but what is common to men. Your battle is not different from the warfare of the rest of the saints; and as God has delivered them he will deliver you also, seeing you put your trust in him.

But *God's ways of deliverance are his own.* He does not deliver according to the translation put upon "deliverance" by the ribald throng. He does not deliver according to the interpretation put upon "deliverance" by our shrinking flesh and blood. He delivers, but it is in his own way. Let me remark that, *if God delivers you and me in the same way as he delivered his own Son, we can have no cause of complaint.* If the deliverance which he vouchsafed to us is of the same kind as that which he vouchsafed to the Only Begotten, we may well be content. Well, what kind of a deliverance was that? Did the Father tear up the cross from the earth? Did he proceed to draw out the nails from the sacred hands and feet of his dear Son? Did he set him down upon that "green hill far away, beyond the city wall," and place in his hand a sword of fire with which to smite his adversaries? Did he bid the earth open and swallow up all his foes? No; nothing of the kind. Jehovah did not interpose to spare his Son a single pang; but he let him die. He let him be taken as a dead man down from the cross and laid in a tomb. Jesus went through with his suffering to the bitter end. O brothers and sisters, this may be God's way of delivering us. We have trusted in God that he would deliver us; and his rendering of his promise is, that he will enable us to go through with it; we shall suffer to the last, and triumph in so doing.

Yet God's way of delivering those who trust in him is *always the best way.* If the Father had taken his Son down from the cross, what

would have been the result? Redemption unaccomplished, salvation work undone, and Jesus returning with his life-work unfinished. This would not have been deliverance, but defeat. It was much better for our Lord Jesus to die. Now he has paid the ransom for his elect, and having accomplished the great purpose of atonement, he has slept a while in the heart of the earth, and now has ascended to his throne in the endless glories of heaven. It was deliverance of the fullest kind; for from the pangs of his death has come the joy of life to his redeemed. It is not God's will that every mountain should be levelled, but that we should be the stronger for climbing the Hill Difficulty. God will deliver; he must deliver, but he will do it in our cases, as in the case of our Lord, in the best possible manner.

Anyhow, he will deliver his chosen: the taunt of the adversary shall not cause our God to forget or forego his people. I know that the Lord will no more fail me than any other of his servants. He will not leave a faithful witness to his adversaries. "I know that my Avenger liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Is this also your confidence? Then do not sit down in sorrow, and act as though you despaired. Quit yourselves like men. Be strong, fear not. Cast yourselves on the love that never changeth and never fainteth, and the Lord will answer all the revilings of Rabshakeh, and the blusterings of Sennacherib.

There are times when we may use this text to our comfort. "Let him deliver him now," saith the text, "if he will have him." You, dear friends, who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ before, how I wish you could try him now! You feel this morning full of sin, and full of need. Come, then, and trust the Saviour *now*. See whether he will not save you *now*. Is there one day in the year in which Jesus cannot save a sinner? Come and see whether the 17th of June is that day. Try whether he will not deliver you *now* from the guilt, the penalty, the power of sin. Why not come? You have never, perhaps, been in the Tabernacle before, and when coming here this morning you did not think of finding the Saviour. Oh, that the Saviour may find you! Jesus Christ is a Saviour every day, all the year round. Whoever cometh to him shall find eternal life *now*. "Oh," you say, "I am in such an unfit state; I am in all the deshabille of my carelessness and godlessness." Come along, man, come along, just as you are. Tarry not for improvement or arrangement, for both of these Jesus will give you; come and put your trust in the great Sacrifice for sin, and he will deliver you—deliver you *now*. Lord, save the sinner, *now!*

Others of you are the children of God, but you are in peculiar trouble. Well, what are you going to do? You have always trusted in God before; are you going to doubt him now? "O my dear sir, you do not know my distress; I am the most afflicted person in the Tabernacle." Be it so; but you trusted in the Lord the past twenty years, and I do not believe that you have seen any just cause for denying him

your confidence now. Did you say that you have known him from your youth up? What! you seventy years of age? Then you are too near home to begin distrusting your heavenly Father. That will never do. You have been to sea, and have weathered many a storm in mid-ocean, and are you now going to be drowned in a ditch? Think not so. The Lord will deliver you even now. Do not let us suppose that we have come where boundless love and infinite wisdom cannot reach us. Do not fancy that you have leaped upon a ledge of rock so high as to be out of reach of the everlasting arm. If you had done so I would still cry—Throw yourself down into the arms of God, and trust that he will not let you be destroyed.

It may be that some of us are in trouble about the church and the faith. We have defended God's truth as well as we could, and spoken out against deadly error; but craft and numbers have been against us, and at present things seem to have gone wrong. The good are timid, and the evil are false. They say, "He trusted in God: let him deliver him now." Sirs, he will deliver us now. We will throw our soul once more into this battle, and see if the Lord does not vindicate his truth. If we have not spoken in God's name we are content to go back to the dust from whence we sprang; but if we have spoken God's truth we defy the whole confederacy to prevail against it.

Peradventure, I speak to some missionary, who is mourning over a time of great trial in a mission which is dear to his heart. Ah, dear friend! Christ intended that the gospel should repeat his own experience, and then should triumph like himself. The gospel lives by being killed, and conquers by defeat. Cast it where you will, it always falls upon its feet. You need not be afraid of it under any trial. Just now, the wisdom of man is its worst foe, but the Lord will deliver it *now*. The gospel lives and reigns. Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth from the tree, and from that tree of the curse he issues his supreme commands. The self-same day in which Jesus died, he took with him into his kingdom and his inmost paradise a thief who had hung at his side. He liveth and reigneth for ever and ever, and calleth to himself whomsoever he hath chosen. Let us drown the taunts of the adversary with our shouts of Hallelujah! The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah. Amen!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxix.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—196, 34, 37 (Part II.).

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MOSES: HIS FAITH AND DECISION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 24TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."—Hebrews xi. 24—26.

WE generally picture Moses with beams of glory rising from his brow, and the two tables of the law in his hand; a stern man holding forth a sterner law. But we must correct our idea. Moses is as much an example of faith as he is a representative of law. What he did was as much due to his faith as were the acts of Paul or John. In describing Moses, the summary must begin "By faith," as much as if we were describing Abraham. Continue to regard Moses as a representative of the law, but also view him as a man of wonderful and powerful faith.

I need scarcely remind you that the faith of Moses was peculiarly active and operative. I might apply the words of James to him, and say, "Likewise also was not Moses justified by works when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and chose to endure affliction with the people of God?" The faith of Moses was what ours must be, a faith which worked by love—even love to God, and love to his people. It was no mere belief of a fact; but that fact had an overpowering influence upon his life. Moses believed, believed firmly and intensely, believed for himself, so that he took fast hold of that which is invisible. Moses showed the reality of his faith in his life, by what he refused to do, and by what he chose to do. Both the negative and the positive poles were made right by his faith. Everything about Moses proved the truth and the vigour of his faith in God. He was second to none among those "who believed God, and it was accounted unto them for righteousness." He was king in Jeshurun, and he was the greatest of law-givers; but yet he happily takes his place among believers who find their all in God. On the *Arc de Triomphe* which is raised in this eleventh chapter of Hebrews the name of Moses is written among the very greatest of those who lived by faith in God. I pray that while I am speaking this morning, faith may be wrought in some here present who have it not as yet; and I pray

also that others who have true faith, but have not yet avowed it, may find themselves drawn to take a decided step, and take their place on the side of God and his people. The question, "Who is on the Lord's side?" is the one I would press upon you this morning, in the hope that, like Moses, many of you may be willing to suffer the reproach of Christ, which has not ceased.

Our first remark shall be, *Moses had faith;* the second shall be, *Moses exhibited clear decision as the result of his faith;* and then, thirdly, we will say, *Moses should be imitated by us.*

I. First, then, MOSES HAD FAITH. I am not going through the whole life of Moses, that were much too large a theme for one discourse; but I shall very much keep to my text.

It is very clear that *Moses believed in God.* He was learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, he had been brought up in the very best academies of the period; but he had not been seduced from faith in his God. There were gods many in Egypt; but Moses worshipped the one God, the God of his fathers; and though he may have known comparatively little of him, he knew enough to have no other God but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I suppose that his mother and father could tell him but little of the family faith; but as they were God-fearing, believing people, they taught him what they knew. He believed in the living God, Creator of heaven and earth; he worshipped one God, the ruler of providence; one God, who is to be obeyed and adored; and to this God he adhered. I would that all of you believed in the living, personal, working, ever-present God! In these days many do not believe in a personal God, but in some sort of force or mystic energy, they know not what. This is virtually to have no God at all. To Moses the existence and ruling power of God were the greatest facts of life. He believed in the one living and true God, bowed before him, desired to be found serving him, and to have him as his friend, even though this should put him into opposition with all the world. Although the pomp, and power, and glory, and wisdom of the ruling nation were all on the side of idols, Moses worshipped the one God; for in his power and Godhead he solemnly believed.

In the next place, *Moses believed that the Israelites were the chosen people of God.* This, of course, he had learned from his parents, and he heartily believed it, though it certainly did not look to be true. If the seed of Jacob were the people of God, why were they left under oppression? Why were they enslaved by Pharaoh? Why were their children doomed to die? Could the elect of God be left in so evil a plight? If God be the God of this people, why are they made to endure affliction? Peradventure they told him that God had revealed unto their fathers, that they were to go down into Egypt, and to be strangers in a strange land; but whether or not, it was the solemn conviction of Moses that the living and true God had chosen the seed of Abraham to be his people, and had taken them into covenant with himself. They were the election of grace. For this cause Moses loved them, and desired to be numbered with them. Certainly, they were not in themselves a very lovable people: there was much about them that must have saddened the heart of Moses. They were ignorant, while he was educated: they had been debased by slavery, while he

was of that brave disposition which is nourished in freedom. When he himself attempted to be their champion, they did not receive him. He found two of them striving together, and when, with gentle words he would have made peace between them, one of them replied, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" Yet Moses said to himself, "Whatever they may be, they are the people of God, and I will be one of them."

Even to this day the Lord has a chosen people, a remnant according to the election of grace. Looking critically at the church of God, we soon detect much that is faulty, many shortcomings and many grievous evils; yet the church of God is God's choice, and we may not despise it. I can say of God's people—

> "These are the company I keep;
> These are the choicest friends I know."

If they are good enough for God, they are good enough for me. If you never join a church till you find a perfect church, you must wait till you get to heaven; and if you could go there as you are, they would not receive you into fellowship. Consider who are the people that acknowledge God in their lives, who hold the truth as it is revealed, who believe the Holy Scriptures, and worship God in the Spirit, having no confidence in the flesh. Cast in your lot with these people, however poor and common-place they may be. If they are not all you would like them to be, neither are you yourself all you would like to be; but simply, because you believe them to be the people of God, cast in your lot with them, begging the Lord to have mercy upon you, and deal with you as he is wont to do to those who fear his name.

Moses further believed that the reproach which fell upon his people was the reproach of Christ. It is said that he "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." But Christ was not there. Christ as yet had not been born into the world. How could the reproach of Israel in Egypt be the reproach of Christ? This shows us that the Christ was always one with his people. Even as the church is the body of Christ now, so were the Lord's people the body of Christ of old. The Lord Christ so sympathized with Israel in Egypt, that what they bore he bore. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." Jesus is that "angel of his presence." Brethren, it is a grand thing to discover and know by faith that the reproach which falls upon the people of God is the reproach of Christ. When Stephen was killed, it was Stephen, was it not, that died? Ay, but the Christ stood up from his throne that day. When Christ spoke to Saul on the road to Damascus he did not say, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute the church?" but, "why persecutest thou *me?*" Christ suffers in the least of his people. The poorest and the most obscure of them, when ridiculed and put to scorn for his sake, is not alone in his grief: the head suffers in the members. The reproach of believers is really the reproach of him in whom they believe. The reproach of Israel is the reproach of Christ, and Moses believed this. "Ah!" said he, "whatever they say against these people, and whatever they do against them, they are really saying and doing against the Lord's anointed."

Furthermore, *Moses believed it to be wisest to be upon the side of God.* "He had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Adding all things up and making a deliberate calculation of the whole business, he believed that it must be right and wise to stand on that side which was in agreement with the living God. He made up his mind that he would be where the Lord was. Now, dear friends, that is a wise conclusion to come to: is it not? Should we not be on the side of God? We are his creatures, should we contend with our Creator? He has been infinitely good to us, ought we not to side with our Benefactor? All that he does is right, all that he permits is just, all that he advocates is pure; should we not be on that side? The other side is the side of evil and darkness, the side of the devil: should we be found there? I trow not. O young man, it will be your glory to be upon the side of God. O young woman, it will be your beauty to espouse the cause of Christ. What can become of us if we are opposed to God, the good and true? Shall the tow contend with the flame, or the wax with the fire? If we are on the side of God, we are on the right side; and being on the right side, we shall have peace of conscience, and rest of heart. The right must ultimately win the day; but even if it were not so, a brave heart is content with being right. Is it just? Is it true? Then put down my name as a soldier in that army.

It must be well to be upon the side of God, because God's worst is better than the world's best. Did you notice how Moses put it? He brings forth affliction, and he esteems it to be better than the "pleasures of sin." Now, pleasures are certainly better than afflictions, according to any ordinary judgment; but Moses came to this conclusion, that although affliction might be God's worst, it was better than the pleasure of sin, which is evil's best. He mentions reproach, which is one of the bitterest kinds of affliction, for many a man can bear pain, but cannot bear ridicule. Moses set down reproach, and he counted it to be better than the treasures in Egypt. Yet the treasures in Egypt were the best things in Egypt—its gold, its horses, its fine linen, and the many things that made Egypt famous. I say he put all these down in the schedule, and then preferred the reproach of Christ to them all. God's fast is better than Egypt's feast. Thus he calmly and deliberately made his decision, and said, "I throw in my lot with the people of God. I take their God to be my God, and where my duty to God may call me, there will I go."

Next, dear friends, note this—*Moses had faith in a future judgment.* He looked beyond the present; for he "had respect to the recompence of the reward." It is dangerous to be always looking at things from one point of view. If we could go quite round, and see things from the future, looking back upon them rather than forward to them, how different they would appear! "Oh!" said a lady to her minister, "I find great pleasure in going to the play. There is the pleasure of anticipation, there is the pleasure of enjoying it, and there is the pleasure of thinking it over afterwards." "Yes," said her minister, "I know all that, madam; but there is one pleasure you have forgotten, namely, the pleasure of meditating upon it on a dying bed." She shrugged her shoulders, she could see no pleasure there. I wish that men would

estimate their pleasures by that rule. How will they look when we lie dying? How will they appear when we stand before the judgment seat of God? When I have once come into eternity, and have to spend it according to the final sentence, how shall I look back upon what I have done? As a Christian man, how shall I look back upon wasted opportunities and idleness in my master's vineyard? As an unbeliever, how shall I regard wasted Sabbaths, rejected entreaties, a neglected Bible, a disregarded mercy-seat? If we could only view things in that clear light which beats about the eternal future we should avoid a thousand mistakes. View the course of life as Moses did, in connection with the recompence of the reward, and a resolve will be taken which will make you commence a life for God and holiness.

Let me not quit this point till I have said that *Moses had a personal faith by which he realized the whole business for himself.* He did not say, "Yes, there is a God undoubtedly, and these are God's people, and there is an end of it;" but he said, "There is a God for me to worship, for me to trust, for me to obey. Here are God's people; I resolve to be numbered with them. Their God shall be my God. I will be one of the sheep of his pasture, and take my part with his flock; if they suffer, I will suffer with them; if they rejoice, I will wait to rejoice till they rejoice."

His faith led him on to personal action. He did not say, "I am placed by providence in the palace of Pharaoh, and so I am not called upon to suffer like the rest of my race." No, no, but he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He did not say, "I am so circumstanced that I need not suffer, and therefore I will keep out of the general trouble as well as I can." You know how men feel, that there is nothing like keeping on the warm side of the hedge. Moses resolved that he would suffer affliction with the people of God. Moses would be on a level with his brethren. He declared himself to be one of the despised nation. The reproaches of them that reproached Christ in his people fell upon him.

This was the faith of Moses, a real personal faith. Come, dear friends, ask yourselves, have you all such a personal faith in God? I tell you, if your faith is not personal and practical faith, it is not worth twopence. It will do you no good, either here or hereafter. It will leave you lost to God if it leaves you still a friend to the world, and an alien from the people of God. Oh, that you may say from your heart, "This God is my God for ever and ever. He shall be my Guide even unto death."

Faith in Moses was the foundation of the whole building of his life. Hast thou faith? then every good thing will come of it. Hast thou no faith? then thou hast no beginning from which a happy end can come. How canst thou read thy title clear to mansions in the skies, when thou dost not, as yet, know the first letters of the alphabet of grace? Thou canst never build up a character such as God will approve; for thou hast not even laid the first corner-stone of faith.

II. Our second point is this: MOSES EXHIBITED A CLEAR DECISION. Oh, that the Spirit of God would work the like in all of us!

Note, first, *the time of his choice:* "When he was come to years." We do not know the exact time to which this refers. When he was

forty years of age he visited his brethren, but his mind may have been made up long before. It was "when he was come to years." I suppose that means early in life, so soon as he was of full age. Why not earlier still? He was in Pharaoh's court under many influences, which may have prevented an earlier confession. We are not sure that God had yet spoken to his heart, so as to make him feel the importance of following the Lord fully. Anyhow, it was in early life that he declined the world and chose his God. It is a grand thing for young people to decide for God soon: it will save them from a thousand mistakes, and bring them a thousand advantages. Early piety leads on to eminent piety: he who begins his journey early travels far in the day. The great bulk of those who have distinguished themselves in the church of God will be found to have been converted while they were yet young. "When he was come to years." Does some youth here claim that he has not yet come to years? I answer—Is this so? Why, the other day you were demanding of your father certain liberties because you felt yourself quite the man; I find that lads nowadays become men earlier than they used to do. I wish they would take upon themselves ripe responsibilities as well as covet ripe privileges. Oh that they would act as Moses did when he came to years! If you feel you have come to years in one way, own that you have come to years in another way; and say, "Now is the time when I must come right straight out and be a Christian man." You young women who do not care to be called girls any longer, I pray you give your hearts to Christ; the sooner you are decided the better.

Still it is said, "when he was come to years," as much as to say, that whatever his decision was while he was yet young, that decision was carried out more practically when he was come to years. We do wish to see young people converted, but we wish it to be as thoughtful a conversion, as clear and deliberate a change as if they were advanced in age. We trust that their following years will confirm what they do in their youth. Now, what say you, men and brethren of mature years? If you could lay aside your religious profession and begin again, would you still make to-day the decision which you arrived at when you were young? Oh yes, we can say, and do say—We have lifted our hand unto God, and we cannot go back; and instead of wishing to go back, we lift both hands now, and cry—

> "'Tis done, the great transaction's done,
> I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

We do not wish to retreat from the covenant of our youth, or draw back from the bond of our baptism into Christ of long years ago. We repeat the vow, and cry, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Moses decided for God early in life; but he also decided when he was capable of forming a mature and deliberate judgment.

Moses went about arranging his life like a man of business, and decided wisely; but we must note well *the prospect which he gave up*. He "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." To be the son of Pharaoh's daughter made him a prince of Egypt. Some have thought that the Pharaoh then reigning had no other child but this

daughter, and that her son Moses would have succeeded to the throne of Egypt. We cannot be sure of that, though it may have been so. The son of a princess has noble rank and grand opportunities. Wealth was evidently to be had: the treasures of Egypt were before him. Honour was his already, and as he grew older titles would multiply upon him. But he said firmly, "No; I cannot be an Egyptian. I am an Israelite, and I prefer the privileges which come to me from Father Abraham to those which come by Pharaoh's daughter. I cannot relinquish my part in the promise and the covenant, but I can and will relinquish all the honours which come of Pharaoh's court." He did so: deliberately did so. "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

A great many would say—What a fool he was to give up what others covet! I fear that many of you professors would not lose a situation for Christ. Some of you could not lose a shilling a week of extra pay for the Lord. Ah me, this is a miserable age! Go with a lancet throughout these Isles, and you could not get enough martyr-blood to fill a thimble. Backbones are scarce, and grit is a rare article. Men do not care to suffer for Christ; but they must be respectable, they must vote in the majority, they must go with the committee, and be thought well of for their charity. As to standing up and standing out for Christ, it is looked upon as an eccentricity, or worse. To-day if a young man proposed to sacrifice his position for Christ's sake, father, and mother, and friends would all say: "Do not think of such a thing. Be prudent. Do not throw away your chance." Once men could die for conscience sake: but conscience is nowadays viewed as an ugly thing, expensive and hampering. No doubt many advised Moses to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, but he steadily refused. He deliberately divested himself of his rank that he might be numbered with the down-trodden people of God.

For a moment, I will show you *some of the arguments* which Moses must have had to meet. In his own mind, when having come to years, he began to think the matter over, many arguments would arise and demand reply. The first argument would be, "*You will be acting very unkindly to your adopted mother*—What will she say? She drew you out of the water when you might have been drowned; she took you home, she saw that you were nursed and cared for, she has had you trained and educated. She has spent no end of money on you; there is nothing you could wish for but what she has supplied it: her heart is entwined in yours: and now, having come to years, if you refuse to be called her son, it will be a very sad return for her love." Natural affection has often proved a serious difficulty in the way of grace. The Lord Jesus has said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and many are thus unworthy." In the case of Moses, a sense of honour would join with affection. He knew that it was right to refuse to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but still, there was something to be said on the other side; for how could he disown a tie which the hands of love had fastened? Could he rend that fond connection? Could he persist in saying, "I am no Egyptian"? I doubt not that he felt, "I should be playing the hypocrite

if I professed to be of Egypt, and I must tell the princess as gently as I can, but still most firmly, that I cannot be called by her name; for I am the son of Amram, of the tribe of Levi, of the seed of Jacob." Moses was an Israelite indeed, and he would not conceal his nationality nor renounce it by becoming a naturalized Egyptian. Though it should tear the heartstrings of his foster-mother, and be even as a sentence of death to himself, yet he would take his stand. Moses thus proved his faith to be stronger than that of many who are mastered by family ties, and held captive by the bonds of earthly love. Unequal yoking is the ruin of thousands. The friendship of the world is the blight of piety. Happy are they who love Jesus more than all!

Next, there would come before the mind of Moses the plausible argument, "*Providence has led you where you are, and you ought to keep your position.*" When Moses looked back he saw a remarkable providence watching over him in the ark of bulrushes, and bringing the Egyptian princess down to that particular part of the Nile to bathe. How singular that she should see the ark, and save the life of the weeping babe! Could he fly in the teeth of providence by relinquishing the high position so specially bestowed? Thus would flesh and blood reason. How often have I heard people excuse themselves for doing wrong by quoting what they call providence! Arguments from providence against positive commands are ingenious deceptions. Providence is of God, but the lesson which we draw from it may be of the devil. When Jonah wanted to flee to Tarshish he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish. How providential! Nothing of the sort. When Cain killed his brother Abel was it providence which found the club? Whenever a man wants to do wrong he will find opportunities at hand; but let him not excuse his wickedness by the apparent opportunity for it. Be afraid of that kind of providence which makes sin easy. When a providence comes across you in doing right, do not give over your gracious purpose, but know that it is sent to try you, whether you can serve the Lord under difficulty. A providence which chimes in with your natural inclination may be a stone of stumbling by which your hypocrisy will be made clear. Moses felt that providence did bring him into Pharaoh's court, but he also felt that it brought him there that he might be put to the test to see whether he would come out of it for the Lord's sake. Do not believe in the reasoning which suggests that providence would have us slide along an easy, though evil, way. Providence, if it be read aright, never tempts to sin, though it may put before us trials for our faith. Our rule of life is the commandment of the Lord, not the doubtful conclusions which may be drawn from providences.

Yet another argument may have met Moses, for it is one which I have heard repeated till I am sick of answering it. *Moses could do a deal of good by retaining his position.* What opportunities for usefulness would be in his way! See how he could help his poor brethren! How often he could interpose at the court to prevent injustice! Moreover, what a bright light he would be in his high position: his example would commend the faith of the true God to the

courtiers and great ones; nobody could tell what an influence would thus be exercised upon Egypt. Pharaoh himself might be converted, and then all Egypt would bow before Jehovah. Thus have we met with brethren who say, "Yes, I am in a church with which I do not agree; but then, I can be so useful." Another cries, "I know that a certain religious Union is fostering evil; but then, I can serve the cause by staying in it." Another is carrying on an evil trade, but he says, "It is my livelihood; and besides, it affords me opportunities of doing good!" This is one of the most specious of those arguments by which good men are held in the bonds of evil. As an argument, it is rotten to the core. We have no right to do wrong, from any motive whatever. To do evil that good may come is no doctrine of Christ, but of the devil. Fallen nature may maunder in that way, but the grace of God delivers us from such wicked sophistry. Whatever good Moses might have thought that he could do in a false position, he had faith enough to see that he was not to look to usefulness, but to righteousness. Whatever the results may be, we must leave them with God, and do the right at all cost.

But, dear friends, do you not think that *Moses might have made a compromise?* That idea is very popular. "Now then, Moses, do not be too strict. Some people are a deal too particular. Those old-fashioned puritanical people are narrow and strait-laced: be liberal and take broader views. Cannot you make a compromise? Tell Pharaoh's daughter you are an Israelite, but that, in consequence of her great kindness, you will also be an Egyptian. Thus you can become an Egypto-Israelite—what a fine blend! Or say an Israelito-Egyptian—with the better part in the front. You see, dear friends, it seems a simple way out of a difficulty, to hold with the hare and run with the hounds. It saves you from unpleasant decisions and separations. Besides, Jack-of-both-sides has great praise from both parties for his large-heartedness. I admire this in Moses, that he knew nothing of compromise; but first he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and secondly, he made a deliberate choice rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." My hearers, come out, I pray you, one way or the other. If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him. If it is right to be an Israelite, be an Israelite; if it is right to be an Egyptian, be an Egyptian. None of your trimming. It will go hard with trimmers at the last great day. When Christ comes to divide the sheep from the goats, there will be no middle sort. There is no place for trimmers. Modern thought is trying to make a purgatory, but as yet the place is not constructed, and meanwhile you border people will be driven down to hell. May God grant us grace to be decided!

Notice *the lot which Moses chose.* He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, but he chose to take his portion with the oppressed, reproached, and ridiculed Israelites. I want you to see the terms in which his judgment is expressed; for no doubt the Holy Spirit tells us exactly how Moses put it in his own mind. He chose rather to suffer "affliction *with the people of God.*" Does not that alter it wonderfully? "Affliction" nobody would choose; but "affliction *with the*

people of God," ah! that is another business altogether. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." I choose the "great tribulation," not because I like it, but because these came out of it, and have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "Affliction with the people of God" is affliction in glorious company. I was reading the other day the life of John Philpot, who was shut up in Bishop Bonner's coal-hole in Fulham Palace. There he and his friends sang psalms so merrily that the Bishop chided them for their mirth. They could have quoted apostolical authority for singing in prison. When there were seven of them, Philpot wrote: "I was carried to my Lord's coal-house again, where I, with my six fellow prisoners, do rouse together in the straw as cheerfully, we thank God, as others do in their beds of down." To be with the people of God, one would not mind being in the coal-hole. No one wants to be in Bonner's coal-hole; but better be there with the martyrs than upstairs in the palace with the Bishop. To hear the saints' holy talk, and sing with them their gladsome psalms, and with them behold the angel of the covenant, is a very different thing from mere suffering or imprisonment. "*With the people of God*": that is the sweet which kills the bitter of affliction. Nobody here wants to go into a burning fiery furnace; but none of us would refuse to be there with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and that "fourth" who was "like unto the Son of God." I admire this in Moses, that he does not look at half a thing; he views it all round, and, having seen it all, he forms his judgment. He did not choose affliction for its own sake, but affliction with the people of God he preferred to the pleasures of sin.

Note the next expression: "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Nobody desires reproach for its own sake; but "the reproach of Christ" is a very different matter. That gives a new flavour to it. Nobody wants to stand up in yonder pillory, where everybody is hurling mud and filth at the object of their scorn; but tell me that the sufferer is the Lord Jesus Christ, and I will find you a host of volunteers to stand with him and gather honour by sharing in his dishonour. "The reproach of Christ." Why, that is glory! Thus Moses placed things in their right light, and they seemed to undergo a complete change.

Now, notice what he said about the baits upon the other side: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy *the pleasures of sin for a season*." See! he calls the pleasures of the court "the pleasures of sin." Why, Moses, you need not fall into vice. You could be an Egyptian, and yet be chaste, and honest, and sober, and just, and good. Yes, but he regards his proposed life as the son of Pharaoh's daughter as full of "the pleasures of sin." Now, mark this: If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it becomes your duty decidedly to come out and stand on his side; and if you do not do so, the pleasures derived from your sin of omission will be the pleasures of sin. You are living a life of disloyalty to Christ, and that is a life of sin. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin"; that is to say, if you have not faith that you are doing right, you are doing

wrong; and as Moses could not feel that he was doing right by being an Egyptian, whatever pleasure he might have gained from his remaining at court would have been "the pleasure of sin." Then note the word, "*For a season.*" Did you hear the tolling of a bell? It was a knell. It spoke of a new-made grave. This is the knell of earthly joy—"*For a season!*" Honoured for doing wrong—"*For a season!*" Merry in evil company—"*For a season!*" Prosperous through a compromise—"*For a season!*" What after that season? Death and judgment.

Note once again, that Moses spoke about treasures; and as a great man in Egypt, he knew what wealth there was in the land; but he qualifies the treasures by saying, "treasures *in Egypt.*" For an Israelite those treasures were nothing, since they were in a foreign land. Treasures in the land that floweth with milk and honey—these were real treasures; but treasures *in Egypt* were a mockery. Moses shakes his head at them. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. So, you see, most deliberately, with great discrimination, Moses made his choice and kept to it, and God blessed him in it. He was preserved in the ark of grace from the hand of the enemy, and was drawn out of the waters of temptation to be consecrated to the high service of God.

III. I want, in the last place, hurriedly to say that MOSES SHOULD BE IMITATED BY US.

First, brethren, *we should have Moses' faith.* The things which Moses believed are true; and therefore ought still to be believed. They are as important to-day as when he believed them; let us lay hold upon them, and feel their practical bearings this very morning. Young men especially, I entreat you to believe in God, and in his work of grace among his people, that you may be numbered with his chosen now, and in the day of his appearing.

Next, we must imitate Moses in this, that if we do believe *we must come out on the Lord's side.* Now that you have "come to years," do let it be seen on whose side you are. Let there be no doubt, no hesitation, no vacillation; but let those who see you in the house or in business know that you are on the Lord's side.

Let me exhort you also to *see things in the eternal light.* Do not look at things in their bearings upon to-day, or to-morrow, or the next few years. Judge by eternity. For the present the good man may be a loser. You must look further than your foot. Take the measuring line of the sanctuary, and use it when you judge of spiritual things.

Note another important matter: I pray that you may *get into fellowship with Christ.* Oh to know Christ and love him, to have him to be your Saviour, and then to feel that you can wear the reproach of Christ as a chain of gold! This is a great help in the life of a tried child of God.

Dear friend, if you are a believer in Christ, *give yourself up to God without reserve:* say, "I will follow thee, my Lord, through flood or flame. I will follow thee up hill or down dale. I will follow wherever the Lord shall lead the way. I will follow at all cost and hazard." Say this in your soul. Take God for your all in poverty and disgrace.

Take God on the bleak winter's day, and say: "I am resolved, God helping me, to do his will."

If you do this, you cannot tell what God has in store for you, nor need you give it a consideration. Moses, after all, was not a loser by his self-denial. He became King in Jeshurun, and was more than a monarch in the wilderness. He refused to be Pharaoh's son, but in the Book of Exodus God said to him: "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh." Egypt's haughty monarch feared his plagues, and entreated his intercession. The Lord made Moses so great, that among those who are born of woman he ranks among the first unto this day. Even in heaven he is remembered; for they sing "the song of Moses the servant of God and of the Lamb." Young man, if you give yourself unto the Lord you can little guess what he will do with you. What you lose will be a mere trifle compared with what you will gain. As to honour, all honour and glory lie in the service of the Most High.

I am come to this pass, my brethren—whether I sink or whether I swim, I am the Lord's! By his grace I will believe his Word and cling to its inspiration, whether the Lord shall roll away my reproach or not. I would say with the three holy children, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." With Job my heart has said: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Be this the resolve of each one, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews xi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—732, 657, 661.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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DAVID DANCING BEFORE THE ARK BECAUSE OF HIS ELECTION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 1ST, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour."—2 Samuel vi. 20—22.

DAVID had been soaring up on eagle's wings. Perhaps never in his life before had he so enjoyed the public worship of God. He had forgotten everything in the delight of bringing the ark of the Lord home to his own city, where he had prepared a tabernacle for its resting-place. He had thrown himself into the gladsome service of the Lord that day. Nor had he been alone in joyful adoration; for all the people had been unanimously with him in honouring Jehovah, the God of their fathers. It had been a high day, a day of days, such a day as the nation had not enjoyed in all its history before.

The king came home to bless his household, wishing that all his family might share in his joy. Exactly at that moment his wife, Michal, Saul's daughter, who had felt disgusted at seeing her husband dressed like a common Levite, and leading the way in the midst of the common people, came out to meet him, full of furious scorn. Her language to him must have acted as if a man had thrown a pail of cold water into his face. With sarcastic words, villainously exaggerating what he had done, and imputing to him what he had never done, she scolded the man she had scorned. How he must have felt it for the moment! We need not wonder if some have thought that his answer was somewhat bitter. Remember that David was not Jesus, but only David.

Always suspect some danger nigh when you perceive too much delight. It may sound like a paradox, but it is true, and experience proves it, that we never seem to be so near meeting the devil as when

we have just met our God. When our Saviour had been on the Mount of Transfiguration with his disciples, he met, at the foot of the hill, a father with a child possessed of the devil! Whenever you enjoy a season of peculiarly close communion with God, and are full of very high joy, be on your guard. The very worst side of the world will be turned towards you when you have been nearest to the eternal throne. Pirates look out for loaded vessels. Probably Michal had never spoken so to David before; but then David had never before danced before the ark of the Lord. Here stood the man of God confronted by one whose feelings were the very opposite of his own. Like an iceberg, she crossed the path of this great vessel, and chilled it like an Arctic winter.

This led David to reaffirm and yet more plainly state his faith in God. As many of the choicest words of our Lord Jesus were brought out of him by the Pharisees, so one of the choicest statements of electing love that David had made was brought out by the shrewishness of Saul's daughter. I hope it will be for our profit this morning to consider it. David justified what he had done by God's choice of him. If he had arrayed himself like a Levite, and danced with all his might before the ark in the presence of the common people, he said, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord."

Dear brethren, there is a great power in the truth of election when a man can grasp it. When he knows for himself truthfully, and by indisputable evidence, that the Lord has chosen him, then he breaks forth in songs of divine adoration and praise: then is his heart lifted up, and he pays a homage to God which others would not think of paying. The Lord Jesus has manifested himself to him as he does not unto the world; and therefore he acts towards the Lord Jesus as the world can never act, and does what the world can never understand. I am going to speak to those of you who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for you are chosen: faith is the sure mark of election. If you believe in Jesus, and are resting in him, this is the token that God has chosen you from before the foundation of the world; for no man yet ever had a true faith in Christ without receiving it from God, and that gift from God is the token that he will give all other saving gifts, and that he has chosen that man to eternal salvation. The effect upon you of your knowing your election of God will be similar to the effect which it had upon David when he knew that the Lord had chosen him to be the ruler over Israel.

I. What effect had this doctrine, this experience, this inward conviction upon David? First, IT MADE GOD THE LEADING THOUGHT WITH DAVID; and I believe that, in every case where a man is inwardly persuaded of the Holy Ghost that the Lord has chosen him out of the world, the sure and certain effect is that the Lord stands out to him in a clear light, and becomes to him the greatest force in his life, the chief motive power, the main thought of his mind. Observe how David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord"; and all through the chapter you constantly read that David did this and that "before the Lord." In the fourteenth verse we read, "And David danced before the Lord with all

his might." It will be so, *God will be realized in every passage of our life.* Has the Lord chosen me to be his own? Then, I see the hand of the Lord in my parentage, in my birth, in my bringing up; I see the hand of the Lord in my calling out from the world, and in my conversion. I see the Lord in his providence, in his preservation of me from the paths of the destroyer; in fact, everywhere I see the Lord. You will notice in the whole teaching of the Puritans, great believers in this doctrine of divine choice, that they saw God's hand in everything. The laws of nature they knew very little about, but the presence of God they knew a great deal about; and to my mind we have made a very poor exchange when we have given up the Lord for his laws, and when the whole bent of our philosophy has been to teach us that God is much further off than our fathers thought. I love still to see God when I wake, and watch through the day and believe that I see him in all that happens. In a thunderstorm I hear the voice of God, and I see his glory in the flames of fire. I love to think of God as sending us the genial shower and the cheery sunshine; I know it is all resolved into natural law, but I am simple enough to see God rather than the law. The man who believes that God has chosen him, from that moment beholds a living God in nature, in providence, and in grace: in fact, the Lord becomes everything to him.

This was especially the case with David *in his devotion.* David that day worshipped God in spirit and in truth. A great many people, when they go up to the assembly, are very particular about their bonnets or their garments. Somebody might, perhaps, notice their bonnets, and this thought weighs heavily on their hearts. I have known people say that they could not go to a place of worship because they had not proper things to go in; their clothes being evidently a great consideration. What a turning aside from God to the tailor! Often people sit in the house of prayer, and profess to worship, but they are noticing who is there, and who is not there; and any little slip in the preacher's language is a welcome diversion to them. They think of anybody and anything rather than God. It was not so with David: to him the Lord was all in all in worship. He said to himself, "I am King of Israel, but that I may avow myself to be the true servant of Jehovah I will put on a linen garment to-day, like a common Levite." This he did "before the Lord." The Lord, who searches the heart, knew what David meant by his dress, by his playing upon the harp, and by his leaping and dancing in the midst of the people. It was "before the Lord" that he showed his excessive joy; and if others happened to be there as spectators, he did not repel them, but he did not restrain himself. If the Lord accepted him, and his offerings, and his praises, he would have all that he wanted, whether the multitude or the princes of Israel accepted him or not. Now, the man who believes that the Lord has chosen him unto himself will worship the Lord alone, and will neither idolize the creature, nor even cast a side-look upon him when he is adoring his Maker. It is ours to worship always, and to worship none but Jehovah. I adore Jehovah; I take his Book in my hand; I read it believing it to be inspired; and while so doing, I do not sit as a

judge, but as a disciple; I do not criticize, but I adore. I look up to Christ on the cross, and I worship God in Christ Jesus: I do not quibble about the righteousness of substitution, but I adore the wisdom and the grace which are displayed therein. He that believes that God has chosen him feels for God so high a regard that he becomes his All in All. He says, "This people have I formed for myself"; and we reply, "This God is our God for ever and ever."

The effect of this truth upon David was also that, as the Lord had become the great influence of his life, and the great object of his adoration, so *he was to him his supreme Lord.* Mark well the language of the twenty-first verse: "The Lord which chose me to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord." David did not say, "Over my people": he acknowledged that they were not his people, but Jehovah's people. He was only lieutenant-governor; the Lord was still the great King of Israel. O dear friends, if you have a due sense of God's choice of you, you recognize that Jehovah is your Lord and King. You are mindful of your stewardship; you admit that you are God's servant. If you have property, it is not yours, but his who has chosen you. If you are placed in office in Church or State, still the Lord who has chosen you has sovereign rights over you, which you acknowledge in your daily life, only grieving that you fail to be perfectly obedient, and that, when you have done all, you are still only an unprofitable servant. Complete subordination to God is the desire of every man who delights in being chosen of the Lord. Oh, that we could practise it more and more! Those who are chosen are the Lord's portion, and are not their own to live unto themselves. Those who hope to be saved by merit work for themselves that they may win their wages; but those who have received the gift of God, which is eternal life, live unto the Lord alone, that they may show their gratitude for his royal love. Our hearts are stout before men, but in the Lord's presence we bow in the dust; the words of others we test and weigh, but at the word of Jehovah we tremble. Every man who recognizes himself as chosen of God will loyally serve the glorious Lord who hath chosen him. It is not ours to follow our wills, wishes, or whims, but ours to fulfil our life's mission at all costs, knowing that he who has appointed us thereto has an absolute right to do as he wills with his own.

The great system known as "The Doctrines of Grace," brings before the mind of the man who truly receives it God and not man. The whole scheme of that doctrine looks God-ward, and regards God as first, and the plan of salvation as chiefly arranged for the glory of the Most High. If you believe that everything turns upon the free-will of man, apart from any purpose of God, you will naturally have man as the principal figure in your landscape; but if you believe that there is a choice on the part of the Lord, then God will become prominent in your thoughts. If you look to be saved by your own works you will of course think much of yourself; if you believe your faith and your repentance to have come to you without the work of the Spirit of God, you will think well of yourself; and if you believe that your future perseverance depends upon your unaided self, you will look to yourself for everything, and you will rely upon your own wisdom and strength. The doctrines which are not of grace lead you

away from God and throw you upon self. On the other hand, if you fully believe the doctrine which Jonah learned in the belly of the great fish—"salvation is of the Lord"—then you will trust in God, hope in God, love God, worship God, serve God, and God will be even unto you as the rising sun, shining more and more in your heart unto the perfect day. I do pray that God may be great, and greatly to be praised in the heart of every one of us. May we serve him with gladness, and come before him with thanksgiving; for we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

II. Secondly, IT WILL CREATE IN US A PROPER DISREGARD FOR HUMAN OPINION. I have already told you that *in his worship David did not allow the opinions of men to weigh with him.* He worshipped "before the Lord," and there he left it. Men might judge him mad, as Michal seems to hint that he was; or they might condemn him as fanatical, extravagant, and rabid; but this was as the chaff of the threshing-floor to him. If any despised him in their hearts he was not moved thereby; for so long as he knew that his heart was right before God, and that his worship was accepted of God, he would let others commend or censure at their own sweet wills. God's chosen servant is not the servant of men. He could not serve two masters, and he does not try to do so. He goes about his Master's business with a holy liberty of soul, for his bonds are loosed towards man.

He does not seek honour from the many. You remember Saul, and what he said to Samuel. Samuel turned away from him in indignation, and was about to leave him, when Saul laid hold upon him, and said, "Honour me before the people." That was the great idea of Saul's mind. "Honour me before the people; let the people think well of me. O prophet of God, do not disgrace me in the eyes of the multitude, but let the people still have me in esteem." David sought not the honour which cometh from men. It would have struck some minds that if the king wore the ordinary garment of a Levite, if he mixed with the crowd, if he became one of the people, if he walked in procession with them, if he even led them in the holy dance, then the common crowd would say in their hearts, "Is this a king? Why should we obey a man who is one of ourselves?" Potentates surround themselves with pomp, and keep themselves apart, that they may have glory in men's eyes. But it did not occur to David to provide against such a danger when the glory of God was concerned. The populace might think as they pleased of him: he was the elect of God, and therefore he did not consider his standing with the people. In the presence of God it became him to abase himself, and he did so, whether it was good policy or not. Kings before God are only men, and however bright their crowns or high their thrones, when they worship they must lay aside their trappings and affectations of superiority, and must bow before Jehovah in the dust. So King David did, and in doing it, he had no fear lest the multitude should hold him in the less esteem. O child of God, have a holy disregard of that *Vox Populi* which is profanely said to be *Vox Dei;* but which once cried, "Crucify him, crucify him."

David did not even consult the judgment of the few. Of course, he had around him a little set of special people, the *élite* of Israel, who had

great reverence for royalty and all its dignity. Michal was the representative of these. Looking out of the window, she looked down upon David in a double sense, for she could not bear to see a king dressed as a servant, a king dancing before the ark. She thought him light-headed, and frivolous, if not distinctly mad. No doubt, there are particularly nice and dainty people who will censure God's chosen if they live wholly to his praise, and they will call them eccentric, old-fashioned, obstinate, absurd, and I don't know what besides. From the window of their superiority they look down upon us. Suppose they do. They may wait until it is their turn to look up, and that will come sooner than they think. The man who says, "God has chosen me," can afford to let others think and speak after their own nature. It is his business to take his stand separately, and deliberately and distinctly to do what he believes to be right, and let the many or the few do as they will.

Beloved, *the doctrines of grace put the very idea of honouring man out of court with us.* Go and listen to certain preachers, and hear how they enlarge upon the dignity of human nature. My friend Dr. Pierson, who prayed just now, has accepted very little of modern teaching upon that point; for he confessed unto God that we were worse than the worms we trod upon. What say you to that? We are not very dignified creatures according to that statement; and I fully endorse it. Dignity of human nature! Dignity of flesh which goes to corruption and the worm! Let those who will extol the creature of an hour, I glorify the Creator, who is everlasting. Fallen human nature deserves no praise. It is not easy to find terms humiliating enough fitly to describe the degradation into which sin has brought us, and the helplessness in which sin has left us, and the need of sovereign grace to save us from perishing for ever. If any think that we should magnify man, we are of another mind; for we wonder that the Lord should be mindful of him, and visit him. The Lord of hosts will not endure that man should magnify himself; for he has purposed to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth.

Proud man-worshippers will despise you if you hold the doctrines of grace: they want something novel, and so they sneer at you as a piece of antiquity. Be content to be old-fashioned, God's choice of you is older than the fashions, and if that stands, you may well stand by the truth of it. Some will despise you for your simplicity, and insinuate that you are destitute of culture and science, and are repeating exploded dogmas only believed in by the illiterate. This refutes itself; for the truly wise never show contempt of others. After all, God's truth is more profound than all the speculations of men. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." Hold you to God's truth, challenge it who may. If you find a doctrine in God's Word which flatters human nature, let me know of it. I find therein great truths which lay our nature among the diseased, the condemned, and the dead; but none which sing its praises. The Scriptures tell us that we must be born again, and called out of our spiritual graves by a miracle; they also tell us that we are not saved by our works, and that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." We

are saved by grace, and grace alone; and that grace is free and sovereign according to that wondrous word, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." So, you see, the effect of this doctrine, when it is really grasped, is to set the Lord on high in the soul, but to put human opinion in a lower place.

III. Then, thirdly, A SENSE OF ELECTION CAUSES A LOW OPINION OF SELF. David said, "I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight." David would more and more abase himself before the Lord. He felt that whatever Michal's opinion of him might be, it could not be more humbling than his own view of himself. Brother, if any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him; for you are worse than he thinks you to be. If he charges you falsely on some point, yet be satisfied, for if he knew you better he might change the accusation, and you would be no gainer by the correction. If you have your moral portrait painted, and it is ugly, be satisfied; for it only needs a few blacker touches, and it would be still nearer the truth. "I will be base in mine own sight." This was well said. Perhaps if David had carried it out more fully, and had been rendered watchful thereby, it might have saved him from his great fall. A sense of electing love will render you base in your own sight. I will tell you why.

First, you will *never understand why the Lord has chosen you.* Often will you sing:

> "What was there in me that could merit esteem,
> Or give the Creator delight?
> 'Twas even so, Father,' I ever must sing,
> 'Because it seem'd good in thy sight.'"

The more sure you are of the divine choice, and the better you understand it, the more will you enquire: "Whence is this to me?"

I dare say David, in a few quick thoughts, reviewed *his former estate.* He saw himself as the shepherd's boy keeping a few sheep in the wilderness. He saw himself fetched home all in a hurry, because Samuel had asked for him. The prophet had come to anoint one of Jesse's sons, and each one of the big brothers imagined that he himself must be the Lord's chosen; but his hopes were quenched as the prophet cried, "Neither hath the Lord chosen this." David must be brought in. What a change from the shepherd boy with a crust in his wallet, to the king who "dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine"! David could not remember the change without feeling that he was unworthy of such goodness. Is it not the same with us?

Then the king recollected *the dangers and troubles he had experienced.* Oh that some persons who talk so proudly could but know a little of the rough side of life! Hunted like a partridge on the mountains, bearing his life in his hand for many a day, David had at last passed out of persecution, and had become the accepted king of all Israel! Because the Lord had chosen him, he had helped and saved him from the hand of all his enemies. His bitter experiences made him wear

his honours meekly. Brother believer, if you have had a tried experience, you will look back upon it with deep gratitude and self-abasement. The tears will be in your eyes as you sing of judgment and mercy, and abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness. I cannot exalt myself, nor talk of my works, my prayers, my desires, my seeking of the Lord, or anything that is my own; for my salvation was all of grace, and the Lord wrought all my works in me. The doctrine of distinguishing grace sinks us, and our experience in connection with it sinks us; we cannot lie low enough before the Lord.

David's *high position* must have made him feel lowly when he knew to whom he owed it all. When a man prospers little by little he may become used to it and grow proud; but when the Lord heaps on his bounties, we become like Peter's boat, which was so filled with fish that it began to sink. Well may we be humbled by the great mercies of the Lord. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." A little while ago we were heirs of wrath even as others. How could the Lord adopt such poor creatures? I cannot make it out. I that once loved sin am now made to hate it. I that was a stranger to God and to his service, am enriched with access to the throne of God. I that was without strength have now grace to do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me. Oh the greatness, the unspeakable greatness of almighty love! Brothers and sisters, if this does not humble you, then you are not really believers. If you have really obtained the mercies of the covenant through the Lord's gracious choice of you, the knowledge of this fact will lay you low and keep you there, your cry will be, "Why me, Lord; why me?" I once had a dear friend, a man of God who is now in heaven, a clergyman of the Church of England, his name was Curme, and he used, with a pleasant smile, to divide his name into two syllables, and say—*Cur me*, which in the Latin signifies, "Why me?"

> "Why was I made to hear thy voice,
> And enter while there's room;
> When thousands make a wretched choice,
> And rather starve than come?"

All the while David had a deep sense of his personal unworthiness. He did not know his own heart fully—no man does so. But he knew enough of himself to make him base in his own sight; for he could never think himself worthy of the choice of God, and all that it involved. Our heart adores and wonders as we think of the election of God. As we rise in the assurance of the divine choice, we sink in our valuation of ourselves.

IV. A SENSE OF DIVINE ELECTION FOSTERS A FEELING OF HOLY BROTHERHOOD. There is David arrayed as a common Levite; he is down among the people, and he is leading them in the holy dance before the ark of the Lord. David, why, you ought to have had too much self-respect to be acting so! Kings should keep themselves to themselves. Dignities should be worn with decorum. Yes, but David does not feel that he is in the least degraded by associating with the people of the Lord. It is wonderful how democratic the doctrines of grace are, and how aristocratic they are too. The chosen are all kings, and

when we mix with the poorest of them we are kings with kings. Free grace strips the proud, but it adorns the humble. If we can fare as God's people fare, we are well content. We despise not one of the least of Christ's little ones. David was the Lord's servant, like the rest of them, and he was not ashamed to show it; nay, he rejoiced that it was so, and said, "O Lord, I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds." Specially had the bonds of pride been broken from him, and he had been made to feel it a joy to be numbered with the least of the people of God.

David honoured the humblest of the Lord's chosen; for when Michal talked about what the handmaids of his servants would say, he answered, "Of the maid-servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour." To be esteemed by them was a cheer to him. I would rather have the esteem of the maid-servant who loves the Lord than the respect of her mistress who is a stranger to the divine life. It is better to have the love of the poorest man in the workhouse if he is a child of God, than to have honour from the most eminent of those who know not the Lord. We do not measure you, my hearers, by the amount of your money or the breadth of your acres: to us there are only two classes—the Lord's people and the Lord's enemies. To which class do you belong? If you are not among his believing people, may the Lord have mercy upon you, and bring you to his feet; but if you are among the heirs of grace, we value you above the gold of Ophir. How beautiful it is to see the learned and the illiterate, the great and the lowly, made one family by the grace of God! It is marvellous what power this has had in the Christian church; and I pray its power may be felt more and more until everything like caste and class is abolished in the church of God, and we shall become brethren indeed and of a truth. As the chosen of God, our names are written in the same book, we are redeemed with the same blood, we are called by the same Spirit, we are quickened by the same life, and hope soon to meet in the same heaven. This is the truest confederation, the union of hearts in the common Lord. As the elect of God we break away from the world, but we come together in one body in Christ.

V. I have been quick upon that point, for time is flying with six wings, and I want to dwell a minute upon my third point. A SENSE OF BEING CHOSEN OF GOD STIRS A DESIRE FOR THE SERVICE OF GOD.

Such service will be *personal*. Look at David. He must serve God himself. He cannot let the priests and Levites do it; he must take a turn as a Levite himself. Lots of people allow their ministers to serve God for them, or they subscribe to societies, that by means of a committee they may serve God at second-hand. The man that God has chosen must have a personal religion, and he must offer a personal service. The woman who had had much forgiven did not come to Peter and say, "Please, Mr. Peter, I have an alabaster box of ointment; will you at some proper time or other be pleased to pour it upon the Master?" No, she must break the alabaster box, and pour out the ointment herself. David cannot be satisfied with all that priests and Levites can do for him; he must honour the Lord himself.

This personal service will be *cheerful.* "David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of David with gladness." Who should be so glad as God's elect? If the Lord has chosen me he has put a chime of bells into the belfry of my soul. Let the slaves who are earning their salvation serve him with gloom and terror; as for me, to whom salvation has been freely given, I must come into his presence with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. The oil of gladness which is poured upon our Lord Jesus as our Head runs down to the least and lowest of us. If you are really chosen of God, you will take pleasure in what you can do for him. Your duty will be your delight. You cannot do enough for your Lord; you are always wanting to do more when you have done most; and gifts which you can present and deeds which you can perform are the greatest enjoyments of your life.

This service will be *in connection with the great sacrifice.* David served God by offering sacrifices. All along the way by which he brought the ark he left a track of blood, the blood of appointed burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. If you serve God aright, you will be for ever remembering the cross, and the substitutionary death there accomplished for our redemption. You will only hope to be accepted in your work of faith through the one great Sacrifice for sin. We need more of Jesus in all that we do for our God.

This service should be *thoughtful.* David set to work and wrote psalms in honour of the Lord that chose him. He who loves God will take a turn at almost everything. He will sing, and bless, and pray, and preach, and a thousand other things, if he can. I would not like a string of my harp to rust. You do not know what is in you yet. Try to do something more for your Lord. Write sonnets to the praise and glory of his wondrous grace if you can.

This service must be *obedient.* David was careful that day in bringing back the ark into the tent in a proper manner. Everything was done according to law. The chosen of God feels bound to be careful of the will of him that chose him. If God commands a thing, it must be done. It may be that he belongs to a church which does not see it; but if he sees it, he does not excuse himself by the blindness of others. If he believes that the Lord has commanded a thing, although it is said to be non-essential and secondary, he obeys. God's precepts bind his chosen. They delight to run in the way of his commandments.

This service should be *practical.* See what David did to show his love to God. He fed the people of God. Was there ever such a flock? I do not know how many millions there were, but David fed them all. "Feed my sheep," said Christ to Peter. David fed the flock committed to his charge that day. Brethren, let us look after the sheep and the lambs, and never weary of giving them food convenient for them. The Lord has chosen us on purpose that we may feed his people.

This service must be *seen at home.* If you are chosen of God you will, like David, bless your household. You will long to see your sons and daughters brought to God. Oh! how you will cry to God, even as Abraham did: "O that Ishmael might live before thee!"

How glad you will be if your child turns out to be an Isaac! There will be family prayer in your house if you know that God has chosen you. For the Lord might say of you what he said of Abraham: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him." It is one of the marks of God's people that they never set up a tent without building an altar. There is no roof to a house if daily prayer is neglected. Saints will have God in the house, for their children and their servants, as well as for themselves. May the Lord's choice of you impel you to his constant service.

VI. Now I come to my last point. A SENSE OF DIVINE ELECTION WILL EXCITE SACRED ENTHUSIASM. David had an *inward delight* in God. God was his exceeding joy. Personally, I have overflowing joy in the doctrines of eternal, unchanging love. It is bliss to know that the Lord has chosen me. When I am down very low in spirit, I crave for those old books which, like the Lord Jesus, are full of grace and truth. You who are at ease in Zion can do with the chaffy modern theology; but when your heart is heavy, and especially when your conscience is under a sense of sin, you will want these two dishes on the table—free grace and dying love, and you cannot do without them. We must have an atoning sacrifice, and free grace to make us partakers thereof. I cannot give up the doctrines of grace, for they are my life. I do not so much hold them as they hold me. The five fingers of the great doctrines of grace have enclosed my heart. I can die; but I cannot deny the imperishable truth. The doctrine of the eternal choice gives forth joy as myrrh and cassia give forth perfume May you all know it!

In David's case his inward peace boiled over in *holy excitement*. Before the ark he was singing, he was harping, he was worshipping, and at last must show it by the joyful motion of his body. His body danced because his soul danced. It was a way of worship well known in Oriental countries, but we do not find it adopted, except when Miriam took a timbrel, and went forth with the daughters of Israel, saying, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." As Michal would not come to lead the way, as she ought to have done, David did it himself. I think I hear him as he sings, and shouts, and sings again. I think I see him throwing his whole soul into the joyful motion with which he expresses his exulting joy. Election sets the soul on fire with enthusiastic delight in God. Certain doctrines would not make a mouse move one of its ears; but the grand old doctrines of grace stir our blood, quicken our pulse, and fill our whole being with enthusiasm. They make me "feel like singing all the time." Free grace wakes me up at night, and makes me wish that I were a nightingale; and all day long it makes me wish that I were an angel, that I might never cease my praise.

O my friends, let us praise the Lord.

> "Come, give all the glory to his holy name,
> To him all the glory belongs;
> Be ours the high joy still to sound forth his fame,
> And praise him in each of our songs."

If my salvation were of my own working, I might fitly praise myself. If I had a finger in it, I might justly praise that finger. If I reached heaven by my own might and merits, I might justly throw up my cap in the golden streets before the cherubim. But, brethren, it is all of grace from first to last: and therefore we exult and rejoice, and leap for joy as we praise and bless the name of God!

To conclude, David felt so exultant that he wished everybody to know of his joy in God. He told all the crowd around of his delight in God; and he sang that day, "Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people." They speak of the narrow, selfish spirit of the Hebrews; why David had a missionary spirit, and often does it flame out in his psalms. They say that those of us who believe that we are the chosen of God are narrow and selfish. We will prove the contrary by our evangelistic zeal.

The greatest missionaries that have ever lived have believed in God's choice of them; and instead of this doctrine leading to inaction, it has ever been an irresistible motive power, and it will be so again. It was the secret energy of the Reformation. It is because free grace has been put into the background that we have seen so little done in many places. It is in God's hand the great force which can stir the church of God to its utmost depth. It may not work superficial revivals, but for deep work it is invaluable. Side by side with the blood of Christ it is the world's hope. How can men say that the doctrine of distinguishing grace makes men careless about souls? Did they never hear of the evangelical band which was called the Clapham sect? Was Whitefield a man who cared nothing for the salvation of the people? He who flew like a seraph throughout England and America unceasingly proclaiming the grace of God, was he selfish? Yet he was distinctly a free-grace preacher. Did Jonathan Edwards have no concern for the souls of others? Oh, how he wept, and cried, and warned them of the wrath to come! Time would fail me to tell of the lovers of men who have been lovers of this truth. This doctrine first makes sure to the man himself that he is the Lord's, and then fills him with a desire to see myriads brought to bow before the Lord of love. Oh, that the Lord would speedily accomplish the number of his elect! Oh, that Christ might see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied! O my dear hearers, how I wish that you would all believe in the Lord Jesus unto eternal life! If you do not believe in him, yet I pray that you may do so this very day, and then this very day you may share with me the exulting delight that God has chosen you from before the foundation of the world. The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Chronicles xv. 1—25.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—100 (Vers. I.), 219, 233.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE CHARGE OF THE ANGEL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 8TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."—Acts v. 19, 20.

THE second persecution of the church, in which all the apostles were put into the common prison, was mainly brought about by the sect of the Sadducees. These, as you know, were the Broad School, the liberals, the advanced thinkers, the modern-thought people of the day. If you want a bitter sneer, a biting sarcasm, or a cruel action, I commend you to these large-minded gentlemen. They are liberal to everybody, except to those who hold the truth; and for those they have a reserve of concentrated bitterness which far excels wormwood and gall. They are so liberal to their brother errorists, that they have no tolerance to spare for evangelicals. We are expressly told that "the high priest, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) were filled with indignation." That which had been done deserved their admiration, but received their indignation. Such gentlemen as these can be warm at a very short notice, when the doctrine of the cross is spreading, and God the Holy Spirit is bearing witness with signs following. Let them display their indignation, it is according to their nature.

To them the only answer which God gave was spoken by his angel: "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Argument will be lost upon them; go on with your preaching. They have lost the faculty of believing: go and speak to the people. They are so given over to their doubts, that it is like rolling the stone of Sisyphus to persuade them to faith. They are so eaten up with objections, that to attempt to answer all the questions they raise would be as vain as the labour of filling a bottomless tub. Go on with your preaching, you apostles; but address yourselves mainly to the people. Extend as widely as possible the range of the truth, and thus answer the opposition of its adversaries. It is better to evangelize than to controvert. The preaching of the word of life is the best antidote to the doctrine of death.

Clearly enough, if they had known it, and had been capable of seeing

it, these blind Sadducees were answered at every point when the apostles were brought out of prison and bore witness to their Lord. Here was the creed of the Sadducees: they said that "there was no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit"; but these apostles stood up and witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What did they make of that? An angel had come from heaven and had brought these apostles out of prison. Then there were angels. As these apostles were set free while the sentries remained standing before the doors, and those doors were afterwards found fastened, if there were no spirit, assuredly materialism had acted in a singular fashion. Every item of their negative creed had been made to fall like Dagon before the ark. The Lord always arranges Red Seas for Pharaohs. All that the apostles had to do was to go on with their preaching, and this they did; for "daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

This morning may we be profited while we consider our text and its surroundings. May he who spake by his angel now speak to our hearts by his Spirit.

I. In reviewing the whole story which we read just now, from the seventeenth verse to the end of the chapter, my first thought is that THE AGENTS EMPLOYED FOR SPREADING THE GOSPEL ARE MEN, AND NOT ANGELS. The angel of the Lord opened the prison door and set free the preachers, but might not be a preacher himself. He might give the ministers their charge, but he had no charge to preach himself. Surely the angel who brought them out of prison was quite able to have gone and proclaimed the gospel, and so he might have brought many out of their prison spiritually. But no; it must not be. His commission permits him to say to the apostles, "Go and speak to the people," but it does not permit him to join in their testimony.

I think that almost with reluctance the angel of the Lord returned to his Master, and left the chosen men to go upon their blessed errand. As our Lord took not on him the nature of angels for man's redemption, so neither doth he employ the agency of angels for man's conversion. I feel glad that, in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, angels are not our competitors, at this present time at any rate. "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." They are ministering spirits, but they have not received the Holy Spirit anointing them to the ministry of Christ.

This divine choice of human instrumentality *puts honour upon manhood.* Those redeemed by the blood of Christ are men, and their redemption from sin by power is to be instrumentally accomplished by men. The great fight which began in the garden of Eden is to be waged by men even to the end. The conquest of the revolted world is to be achieved by men under the leadership of the all-glorious Son of man. Ye see your calling, brethren. I pray you, everyone, to preach the gospel in your vocation; but specially would I plead for zeal with those whose very vocation it is to preach the gospel. What a vocation is ours! What can be more honourable? What more responsible? To rule empires is a trifle compared with speaking to the people all the words of this life. "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Thou makest him higher

than the angels in this respect, that out of his mouth thou hast ordained strength because of thine enemies. Such honour have all the saints, for they may all either teach or preach Jesus Christ.

My dear hearers, you may be yourselves grateful that this ministry is committed to men, because *it is a condescension to human weakness.* Imperfect as human ministers are, we are better preachers to you than angels could be. We cannot sing with their celestial melody, nor charm you with their seraphic eloquence; but we have a sympathy with you which they cannot feel, seeing they are not compassed with infirmities, nor humbled by imperfections. We know your sins, your sorrows, your struggles. We know the roughness of the road you traverse; for we, too, came in at the wicket-gate, and have floundered in the Slough of Despond, and scrambled up the Hill Difficulty. We can have compassion, and give direction learned by experience. I suppose an angel would command a very large congregation for a time; but, after a while, you would feel that there was something alien and distant about the manner of his teaching. You would be awed rather than comforted. A being altogether superior to yourselves would before long drive you to cry for your old minister again, with lips of clay and heart of love. You would prefer our feeble pleadings to the more glorious, but less brotherly, address of an angel from heaven.

God's use of the ministry of men is honourable to men, and it is condescending to men, and surely it *is a blow at Satanic pride.* The Prince of the power of the air might have felt proud to contend with angels, finding in them foemen worthy of his steel; but when the Arch-enemy sees before him no combatant but a man sent of God, he feels like Goliath when he saw David, a youth and ruddy, approaching him with a sling and a stone. Disdaining such an adversary, I hear him cry, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" Yes, Satan, thou art no better than a dog, and we come against thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. By humble, truth-speaking, earnest men the Lord turns the battle, and routs the forces of error, that the old Serpent may still feel the foot of the seed of the woman upon his head. He thought he had made an easy prey of man; but it shall be by man that the enemy shall be driven back to his infernal den with defeat. By man came death, and by man came also the resurrection of the dead; which glorious fact is proclaimed by man, to the eternal shame of him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil.

To work by men *must bring special glory to God.* The weaker the instrument, the more honour to the worker. I like to think, whatever I may feel driven to believe from Scripture, that the great fight between good and evil will be so fought out that the Lord shall conquer by feeble men even to the end. The omnipotence of God will be glorified in the insignificance of the agents by whom he will achieve the everlasting triumph. Those first apostles brought all the more glory to God because they came from the fishers' nets, and were called "unlearned and ignorant men." The weakness which men despised compelled them to confess that the power which they wielded was divine. The Spirit of God who spoke by them found in them no fancied wisdom to obstruct his impulses. If the Lord will graciously

use us poor ministers to the end, it will wonderfully illustrate his wisdom and power. Somebody once said that it proved the divinity of our holy religion that it survived ministers; and there was a good deal of truth in the remark. How I have wondered that this congregation has survived me! and I think we may wonder that as a whole the gospel survives its advocates. We are poor tools. I do not refer to you, brethren, from America, but I mean all of us in England, and specially myself. We are poor tools after all; and if God uses us to save sinners and sanctify saints, he must certainly have all the glory of it. Brethren, the Lord has used us, blessed be his name! He has used us; we should give the lie to manifest facts if we were to deny it. Brethren, the Lord means to use us. He hath said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

I cannot help adding that the employment of men as soul-winners *gives a tender joy to the heart of Jesus.* It pleases the Lord Jesus Christ that God should use men; for he himself is a man. God, as he is, blessed for ever, yet is he most truly man, delighting in humanity, and pleased to see men called to a work of so much glory and honour. He loves to bless men and to see them made a blessing. He delights to see the many brethren used in their measure in the same way as himself, the Firstborn. The Lord Jesus must take great pleasure in the attempts of his servants to seek and to save souls; for they are learning to be shepherds like himself. When our King, Edward III., heard that the Black Prince was having a hard battle with the French, he smiled to think that his son was in a place where he could show his valour. When he was entreated to send off reinforcements, he refused; for he wished his son to have the undivided honours of the day. The Lord Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, puts some of his chosen into places of great peril, and he does not seem to send them all the help they could desire, in order that they may prove their faith and consecration, and thus earn their spurs. He takes a brotherly pleasure in the courage and faith which he himself has wrought in them. All the valour of Christ's soldiers is given them by himself, and all that it achieves is to be attributed to him; yet he finds joy in seeing them exercise their graces. Like as a father delights to see his boy take prize after prize at the University, like as a friend delights to see his friend elected to one honourable position after another, so does Jesus rejoice in the honours earned by his servants in the field of service. When we save a soul from death, Jesus, the Saviour, rejoices in the deed. When we thus cover a multitude of sins, Jesus, the sin-bearer, sees of the travail of his soul. The father in the parable was glad when his prodigal son was found; but he would have been gladder still had a brother found him. Our Lord Jesus desires to make us happy with that which makes himself happy, and so he sends us out to win souls.

All these are good reasons why the Lord should employ men and women to spread the gospel rather than cherubim and seraphim. Dear friends, do you not think that the angels must often wonder at us? When they see men eager upon politics and negligent of souls, are they not astonished? Do they never say, "We wish the great

Lord would let us go and speak to perishing souls. We would speak with all our hearts"? Do they not sometimes say to one another, "What are these men at? Do they disdain their high calling? God has given to them the great privilege of preaching and teaching his holy word, but they do not care to do it. They speak as if they were half asleep. Here is their zeal for God, their love to men, their earnestness for Christ"? Brethren, these holy spirits must feel ashamed of us! True, they are our servants, and bear us up in their hands, lest we dash our feet against a stone; but must they not sometimes wish that we were stronger on our feet, and were more eager to dash our hands against the enemies of God? We are carried as invalids, when we ought to be fighting like champions. I charge you by the angels of God, who are not permitted to touch this holy work, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season. Preach with a vigour worthy of the divine exercise. Preach the word in some such style as you would expect from those who are bought with the precious blood of Jesus.

So have I spoken to you who are men. As for thee, O angel of God, thou hast opened the prison doors and set free the men of God; but thou must now go back to him that sent thee. Bright spirit, I dare not offer thee my pulpit. Feeble as I am, I must do the preaching. Oh, that thy Lord and mine may help me, and enable me to make full proof of my ministry! Farewell, angel of God, go thou thy way!

II. Secondly, THESE MEN ARE TO TEACH THE PEOPLE. All the words of this life they are to speak.

The manner of their teaching is hinted at—They are to do it promptly, yea, immediately. "Go," says the angel, "go. Do not linger here. Go at once." They did go, so that they were in the temple courts early in the morning. The first beams of the sun that were reflected from the golden roof met their eyes. The first worshippers in those hallowed courts heard the apostles testifying of Jesus and his love. O dear servants of God, let us run with the glad tidings. "The King's business requireth haste." The first moment we can get man or woman to listen to us, let us speak the living word which we have learned at the feet of Jesus.

They were to make this their primary business. "Go," said the angel, "before anything else: this be your chief employ." I should have been tempted to linger a little just to find out how the angel released the prisoners. He had opened the doors, so we are told, but yet they were found closed and fastened when the officers came, and the sentries had not left their posts. Here is a mystery; I should like to clear it up. Are there not many such mysteries? But the command is pressing and peremptory: "Go, speak to the people." "Let me tarry; one does not see angels every day. Let me stay and take in a more complete idea of the heavenly stranger. Indulge me with a little conversation with one who has seen my Lord. There are a great many questions which I would fain have answered." Dear fellow-worker, we perhaps are tempted to study very deeply into mysterious points which do not minister to profit; let us, then, hear the angel say, "Go, speak to the people." Let us keep our thoughts to that gospel which we are sent to preach. "The words of this life" will furnish ample scope

for all our powers; let us not wander into endless debates which are rather for curiosity than salvation, and tend rather to gratify our taste than to accomplish our life-purpose. The first and chief business of the man of God is, "Go, stand and speak to the people." However simple the speaking, it may be rather talk than oratory; this is our one great business here below.

It is clear from the text that they were to take a conspicuous place and speak boldly: "Go, stand in the temple." Go where the Sanhedrim holds its sittings, where the high priest and his Sadducean comrades are on the watch. Let not the danger hinder you. Go where all can see you; stand up and stand out. Wherever the people are, there let your voices be heard. Be there perseveringly, taking your stand, and keeping it till removed by force. The object was to make the gospel known; therefore, let them go to headquarters, let them stand in the chief place of concourse, let them be in the resort of the devout, let them challenge the observation of pilgrims from every corner of the land. Brethren, it is not ours to hide in holes and in corners; our gospel is like the sun, whose line has gone out through all the earth. Let us not speak timidly, for we have not received the spirit of fear, neither will we hide our candle under a bushel. We are to publish the tidings of that life from the dead which has brought life for the dead.

The persons for whom this preaching is designed are mentioned: "Speak unto the people." "Unto the people," that does not mean the poor to the exclusion of the rich, nor the many to the exclusion of the few. The expression is most comprehensive, and embraces both the masses and the classes. If the men of the council would hear them, let them speak to them. They did so, alas! with small result. This is a truly gospel word of command; for the gospel is glad tidings to all people, and it is to be preached to every creature under heaven. A restricted audience is an unevangelic idea. Go and speak unto the people, then: to all sorts of people, to everybody. Let not a soul escape if you can help it, for your mission is to all mankind. O gospel fisherman, spread the great seine net, which will encompass a great multitude of fishes, and with diligence draw it to shore.

If we take the word "people" in its popular sense, it has a lesson to all who teach the word. Some aim at the intellectual, let us speak to the people all the words of this life. A minister whose congregation numbers about forty all told rejoiced in the smallness of it, because he professed that a greater work could be done with a few than with a large number. In answer, a friend suggested that he should infer from that statement that a greater work could be done with no people at all. This reduced the hypothesis to an absurdity. "I am sure," said one, "that the better a man preaches the smaller his congregation will become." This shows what a large number of very excellent preachers we have in London. But our business is to reach the people somehow. To obey the text, we must "Go and speak to the people." They need it; are they not perishing for lack of knowledge? The gospel is adapted to their needs and capacities—it is simple, suitable, seasonable, saving. The people will receive it. If the poor have the gospel preached to them, they will hear it.

God inclines the hearts of the multitude to hearken. We read of Jesus, that "all the people were very attentive to hear him." Moreover, the people retain the truth when they receive it. Note this fact in history: the Reformation in Spain was among the nobility, and it was the same in Italy, and the work soon subsided. In England the common people received the truth from Wycliffe, and it never died out. If you wanted to burn a haystack, you would set it alight at the bottom; and if you want a whole nation to feel the power of the gospel, it must first be received by labourers and artisans. The martyrs of England were largely taken from weavers and such like. The people love the man "chosen out of the people." The Bible is their charter, the gospel is their estate, and when they know it, they will retain it with heroic constancy. What is more, they will spread it. Christ's first preachers were of the people; and in the streets of London to-day, and in the Sunday-schools of England to-day, you will find that the people are to the front in holy work. We are glad to see the noble, the great, the rich, the cultured dedicated to our Lord; but, after all, our chief hope lies among the people.

The angel even mentioned *the place to which they were to go:* "Go, stand in the temple." It was the most public place in all Jerusalem; therefore, "Go, stand in the temple" rather than in a private house. It was the likeliest place to find attentive hearers: the noise of the sheep-market and the bazaar would be absent. Those who came early would probably be among the most devout. "Go, stand in the temple." But when they were bidden to stand in the temple it meant that they were to stand in any place and every place where an audience could be gathered. So they understood it according to the last verse of the chapter: "Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Fellow-workers, our business is to speak to the people concerning eternal life; and we must see that we do it. If in this great house so many will gather that the utmost capacity of my voice is used up, this is the place for me to preach in; but if the people will not come here, I must go after them. We must take public halls and assembly rooms; we must even hire theatres and music-halls, or stand in the streets: for we must speak to the people. As men enlightened from on high we must carry the light to the eyes of men. We must carry bread to the hungry, and healing to the diseased. If not by one style of speaking, yet by another, we must so speak as to be heard: it is of no use to go on droning to empty pews, or holding forth to bare walls. We *must* get at the people. This is what the angel bids us do. "Go," said he, "speak to the people all the words of this life."

III. Thirdly, THIS MESSAGE IS DESCRIBED: "Speak to the people all the words of this life." Our teaching, if we are true to Christ, will be not only a doctrine, but a life. The high priest conceived that they preached doctrine; for he said, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." Yet it may as truly be called life as truth. The Christian religion is like Christ—way, truth, and life. We have to preach "words of life"; truth which brings life, feeds life, and perfects life. We are to preach all the great truths which concern eternal life.

What are the "words of this life"? If I had to give a short list of them, I should say, the first word of this life is "*Jesus Christ*"; for in the forty-second verse we read, "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ": Jesus has the words of eternal life. We preach his Deity, his manhood, his offices, his sacrificial death, his resurrection, and everything about him. We preach Christ crucified, and if we did not, we should not speak the words of life.

The next word to use would be "*atonement*." There is no preaching "the words of this life" except we preach the sacrificial death of the Son of God. The apostles boldly spoke of our Lord's death, for they said to the council, "Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." They had mentioned the precious blood; for the high priest said, "Ye intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Leave out the satisfaction made by Christ for sin, leave out the doctrine of a real and effective substitution, and you have left out of the gospel "the blood which is the life thereof." "The words of this life" are not preached to the people where the cross is put in the background.

The next word, to my mind, would be "*resurrection*." This they preached very fully, saying, "Him hath God raised from the dead." The resurrection of Christ secured the justification of believers, and also guaranteed their resurrection from the dead by virtue of their union with him. If the resurrection were more fully preached at this time, I am sanguine that it would be a powerful means of conversion.

Nor could the apostles forget "*regeneration*." They would echo their Lord's words, "Ye must be born again." This new birth is possible to you, for "he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Leave out the doctrine of the new birth, and you have left out one of the cardinal "words of this life."

Then comes "*faith*." What a word is this! "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "By grace ye are saved through faith." He who does not preach justification by faith has not begun to preach "the words of this life." He that believeth in Christ hath everlasting life; but without faith all is death.

The sixth out of seven words is "*indwelling*." The Holy Spirit comes into the heart, and abides there, working sanctification within, and producing holiness without. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and if holiness be not preached as the effect of the indwelling Spirit of God, "all the words of this life" are not spoken to the people.

Then comes the doctrine of *the eternal life:* that the life given by the Holy Spirit never dies. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This eternal life is seen here in the perseverance of the saints; it is seen hereafter in their immortality and endless glory. To leave out this would be to leave out the grandest of "the words of this life."

If you desire another outline of the gospel, I would refer you to Peter's little address to the council. Read at the twenty-ninth verse. Here is *the principle of this life:* "We ought to obey God rather than men." He who gets this life into him, will be under law to God, and when that law goes counter to the authority of man, man's

law will go to the wall. God is supreme to the man who has this life: he lives as an obedient child of God.

The next great truth mentioned by Peter is *the cause of this life.* He declared the death of Christ—"Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree"; that followed by his resurrection—"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus"; that followed by his ascension to glory—"Him hath God exalted with his right hand." These are historical facts which contain vital doctrines. We must keep on hammering away at this: Jesus died, rose again, and rose to heaven to make intercession for us; because of all this there is life for the sons of men. There is no teaching "all the words of this life" unless these three great facts flame out like the stars of heaven, and are made to be essential to our eternal life.

Then comes *the manner by which we receive this life*, namely, as a free gift. Jesus is exalted "to give repentance." The gift of God is eternal life. Salvation is by free grace, and free grace alone. "This life" is never an evolution. Spiritual life does not lie dormant within the dead heart of man; it is an importation from heaven, an implantation by the Spirit. We are quickened by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit.

Here we have *the beginning of this life*, namely, repentance, a sense of sin, a turning from it, an abhorrence of it: this is the gift of Jesus, and the beginning of the new life.

Then you have *the privilege of this life*—"forgiveness of sin." He that lives in Christ is set free from the guilt of sin by the righteousness of Christ.

Then comes *the evidence of this life*—"whereof we are witnesses." We speak to you of a life which we have felt. We do not talk to you about an imaginary thing: we speak about a fact which we have observed, nay, a fact which we have felt. A far greater witness is the Holy Ghost, who, as he converts and sanctifies men, bears the best possible testimony to the truth and life of the gospel.

The fruit of this life must also be preached—"whom God hath given to them that obey him." There is no life in Christ apart from obedience to Christ. Obedience is the sure result of our being made to live by the Spirit of God, nor must this ever be forgotten.

Thus have I very roughly told you what you are to preach.

IV. But now, fourthly, THE WHOLE OF THE DIVINE MESSAGE MUST BE DELIVERED. "Stand in the temple, and speak unto the people *all* the words of this life." Dear brethren, it is forbidden us to omit any part of the gospel. I am very glad it is; for if we were permitted, we should sometimes shirk the unpopular parts of it. Yet surely it would be very *dangerous* to omit any part of the gospel, would it not? It would be like a physician giving a prescription to a dispenser, and the dispenser omitting one of the ingredients. He might kill the patient by the omission. The worst results follow the keeping back of any doctrine: we may not see those results, but they will follow. Possibly only the next generation will fully display the mischief done by a truth concealed or denied. It would be a dangerous experiment for any one of us to make.

And would it not be *presumptuous* to leave out a word? If we might

take away from the testimony, who among us is wise enough to know what to omit?

It is a thousand mercies that we are not left to pick and choose, for this would involve us in responsibilities far too weighty to be borne. It is too *responsible* a business for us to enter upon.

Would not the liberty *be injurious to us?* Would it not encourage pride? Should we not think ourselves somebody if we were allowed to make a selection of the best parts of the sacred message? Surely, he that judges is greater than that which is judged. We should soon imagine ourselves to be far more nearly infallible than the Holy Scriptures.

Would not this greatly *dishonour God?* Would it not suggest that God's gospel is full of superfluities and excrescences, and needs our wisdom to make it perfect? Should we not conclude that the Lord was not so wise as ourselves if he needed our assistance to adapt his gospel to the occasion?

Do you not think it would open a very *easy way for another gospel?* If we might omit, we might also add; and I feel sure we should very soon add a great deal which would neutralize and paralyze that of the gospel which remained. If we felt at liberty to leave out something, we should naturally omit that which is offensive, and away would go the tooth and edge of the gospel. That which is offensive in the gospel is just that which is effective. What men oppose is what God uses. If the offence of the cross had ceased, the power of the cross would have ceased also. It is not left to us to cut and carve the doctrine of Christ: we are to preach "all the words of this life."

Have we done so? That is the question. Have we knowingly concealed anything? "Well," says one, "I have not preached *all* the words of this life *to the people*, but I have preached them to a choice company." But you are told to preach them *all to the people.* The doctrine of reserve must not be tolerated among Protestants. We must not make that philosophical division which is expressed in those two ugly words *esoteric* and *exoteric.* This is abolished by the command to preach to the people "*all* the words of this life." We shall get into no end of mischief and dishonesty if we incline to this Jesuitry. We want an open Bible for every eye, and a plain ministry for every ear. We are to preach "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" in fair proportions, and to preach this to the people openly.

At the present moment there is a great tendency to be obscure upon the true and proper Deity of Christ. I enjoyed the commencement of the prayer just offered by our dear friend Dr. John Hall. I enjoyed the whole of it, but I was greatly touched by his lowly adoration of our divine Lord. The Broad men will say that Jesus is divine, but they do not mean that he is God: they speak of his divinity, but they reject his Godhead. This is juggling with words. I hate deceptive phrases. We believe in the Godhead of Jesus, and worship him as God. Christ Jesus is either God or an impostor: there is no halting-place between the two. He said that he was God, he permitted his disciples to think that he was God; he has left words in Scripture which have made millions believe him to be God; and he

could not have been a good man if, as a mere man, he had produced such an impression, and had taken no pains to remove it.

There is also a sad tendency to becloud the truth of man's fall and depravity; but if you do not preach man's ruin, you cannot preach "all the words of this life." You must be clear about his spiritual death, or you will never be right about his quickening into spiritual life. Unless you preach the terrible doom of the wicked, you will never see the greatness of the salvation which comes to us by our Lord Jesus, who has "the words of eternal life."

The work of the Holy Ghost is left too much in the rear by many preachers. Have we not heard of late that certain children do not need to be converted, that the divine life is in them at their birth? Have they not preached education rather than regeneration, evolution rather than conversion? This is not speaking "all the words of this life." It is telling out "old wives' fables."

Brethren, have we not also a few about us who will not bear "all the words"? for if you preach holiness as the fruits of the new life, they say you are legal. Verily, the results of this life are among the most important of the words which must be spoken to the people. Grace which does not make us hate sin is false grace. We must preach repentance from dead works, and faith which works by love, and the people must be told that Christ has not come to save men *in* their sin but *from* their sin. On this we will be clear as the sun at noon.

If there be any other point of truth which is kept back, let us bring it the more forward. Let us insist doubly upon that which others neglect. It needs that the whole gospel be brought before the people, that they may know it, and feel its power. It will involve you in strife and struggle if you resolve on delivering an all-round gospel; but fear not, the Lord will help you, even he who says to you by his angel, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."

I have done when I have asked what we are doing about this? We who are God's people, what are we doing in this matter? Some of us are preaching, are we preaching the whole gospel? Has any doctrine been withheld? Let us bring forth things new and old, and keep back nothing. Let us put every stone into the arch, lest our building come to nothing. Have we also preached these truths as words of life? Have we felt the life in them? Have we expected life to come by them? Our preaching will be very much what we believe it will be; and if we do not believe that God is going to bless it, he is not likely to bless it. If we do not expect to see life created by the living word, we shall preach dead sermons to dead ears.

Have we preached as witnesses? Complaint is made sometimes of a preacher that he says too much about his own experience. I do not believe that he can do so, for our experience is our witness-bearing. You can be egotistical, and say that which is to your own credit, and this is censurable: but you can also be happily egoistical, and say that which is to God's glory, and that is commendable. You may lawfully say, "This is true. I have proved it!" This is one great

reason why God uses men instead of angels to speak the gospel, because men can support their message by their experience, and angels cannot.

But, beloved friends, are there not some of you who never tell anybody "the words of this life"? In such a congregation ought it to be possible to put your finger upon a single regenerated man or woman who has never for a whole lifetime spoken to another about the things of God? Are such persons regenerated? I will not come round and mark you; but, alas! some of you have never even confessed your faith in Christ. If you have not obeyed that important command for yourselves, you are not likely to have done much for the souls of others. But having joined the church of God, are any of you satisfied to be silent? Are you content to let those around you sink to hell? What! never tell of Christ's love? What! never speak of salvation to your own children and servants? Can this be right? In God's name, wake up! What are you left on this earth for? If there is nothing for you to do, why are you in this sinful world? You ought to be hurried off to heaven, where you might praise God. No, no, I am afraid I am mistaken. You could not praise God in heaven, you have not learned the way. You could not join in the song of the redeemed, for you have never had a rehearsal. Begin, begin, begin at once to praise Jesus in the ears of someone. Tell of Jesus and his love to sinners on earth, or how will you be able to make it known to angels, and principalities, and powers?

Could not some of you do more than you are doing? Are there not young men who might preach in a street-corner or at a cottage-meeting? Some of our evangelistic societies flag for want of preachers. It ought not to be the case. What are you at? If you could not preach to men and women, could you not teach the children? Very many Sunday-schools in this region are straitened dreadfully for want of teachers. I could tell you of Ragged-schools on Sunday evenings where multitudes of children are turned away because there are no teachers. What are you at? You confess that you are not your own, but bought with a price by the Lord Jesus: why, then, do you not serve him? I have succeeded to a large degree in routing some of you out: I miss you on Sunday evenings, and a good miss too, since I know where you are, and that you are out serving God. You take your meal in the morning, and then you feed others in the after part of the day. The Lord bless you in it. You were not created to sit in these pews, and listen to me: there is something better for a mortal man to do than to be a hearer only.

I charge every Christian man and woman here to listen to what I am about to say. Though I am no angel, I repeat in the name of the Lord Jesus the command of the heavenly messenger: Go, stand out boldly, and speak unto the people all the words of this life; and may God bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts v. 12—42.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 486, 483.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PLAIN DIRECTIONS TO THOSE WHO WOULD BE SAVED FROM SIN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 15TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord."—Psalm iv. 4, 5.

DAVID was surrounded with many wicked and cruel enemies. They touched him in a tender place when they mocked his religion, and so turned his glory into shame. They invented all kinds of lies against him; but the worst of all was that they said, "There is no help for him in God." As much as to say, "God hath cast him off; therefore, let men cast him off. He that is forsaken of the Lord is not fit to sit upon the throne of Israel; let us set up Absalom in his place." This was malice indeed.

David first made his appeal to God in prayer. Herein he showed his wisdom. You can drive a better business at the mercy-seat than in the world's jangling markets. You will get more relief from the righteous Lord than from ungodly men. To enter into debate is never so profitable as to enter into devotion. Carry not your complaint into the lower courts, but go at once to the Court of King's Bench, where the Judge of all presides. Copy David, and David's Lord, who in the days of his flesh with strong crying and tears poured out his soul before the Father.

After David had prayed, he expostulated with his adversaries. The first showed his sonship towards God, the second his brotherliness towards men. There is nothing of bitterness in the words I have read to you: they have a kindly voice in them. If his foes had been at all reasonable, they would have listened to his pleadings; but it is to be feared they were otherwise minded. He urges them to cease from sin, and he teaches them the way to do so. In four sentences he helps them to escape from their evil ways, and to become better men. Had God's Spirit applied David's words to their consciences, they would have been pricked in their hearts, and there would have been no need for them to be smitten on the cheek-bone, that their cruel teeth might be broken. Upon these four precepts I would speak this

morning as the Holy Spirit shall give me utterance, trusting, hoping, believing that many who desire a better life may find it while I speak. May God begin with them, that they may begin with God! I have no confidence in my own persuasions; yet, being called to use them, I trust in him that sent me to make them effectual.

David mentions four things as helpful towards ceasing from sinning. The first is, *feel reverent awe:* "Stand in awe, and sin not." The second is, *use thoughtful self-examination:* "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." The third advice is, *make a right approach to God*—"Offer the sacrifice of righteousness": and the fourth is the greatest of them all: *exercise faith*—"Put your trust in the Lord." Here are four stepping stones across the filthy slough of sin; may you mark them well, and step from one to the other by the help of God's Spirit, till you reach the other shore, and stand on safe and clean ground!

I. First, FEEL REVERENT AWE: "Stand in awe." It might be translated, "Tremble, and sin not." Hardened sinners sin, and tremble not; penitent sinners tremble, and sin not. Gracious work in the heart usually begins with trembling. I cannot believe a man has been saved if he has never trembled before God because of the evil of sin. The old house of depraved nature shakes before it comes down. The returning prodigal must feel, "I am not worthy to be called thy son," or he will never be called a son. He seeks his father's face with much trembling, because he has so grievously offended.

Awe is not a common emotion nowadays. This is a flippant age. Men are rather triflers than tremblers. If there be any doctrine which has peculiar weight and solemnity about it, they try to pare it down to less terrible proportions. Sin is not exceeding sinful to them, nor its punishment exceeding terrible. They would not have us know the terrors of the Lord, though by these very terrors we persuade men. But true religion must have a savour of awe about it: "My heart standeth in awe of thy word," is the expression of one that knows God, and is reconciled to him. Let me say, then, to you who have been thoughtless and careless about your souls until now—we earnestly desire you to consider these words: "Stand in awe."

Remember, *there is a God:* whatever you may desire, or others may declare, there is a God who made you, and in whose hand your breath is. There is a God that sitteth in heaven, who beholdeth all the sons of men; and however much you may dislike the thought, there he is, and there he ever will be, and you will have to deal with him, and he with you, before long.

God is everywhere present, at all times. He has seen all your evil ways, and heard all your hard speeches. No night is so dark as to hide from his eye; no chamber so retired as to shut him out. He has even read your thoughts and imaginations. He notes all, and forgets nothing. All things are ever present to him; the days of your youth and the years of your manhood lie open before him like a book. If men could but realize that God is there, how could they dare to sin before his very eyes? If at this moment any one of my hearers who is without Christ could only be filled with this one thought, "Thou God seest me," surely he would stand in awe, and at least desire to

sin no more. Well may the preacher speak very solemnly when he feels that he is surrounded with God, and that God is within him as well as around him! Well may his hearer tremble if he feels that all his thoughts are at this moment read by God! Stand in awe, I pray you, of God, who is now filling this house, and is in your own houses. Will you sin in God's presence? Can you blaspheme him to his face? Will you disobey him while his eyes are fixed upon you? I pray you stand in awe of the eternal God, in whom you live, and move, and have your being!

Remember that this God, who is everywhere, and sees everything, *is your Judge.* He is pure and holy, and cannot bear iniquity. He is angry with the wicked every day, and will surely visit them for their transgressions. Every sinful act shall have its recompense of reward. Do not doubt it. The world is all in a tangle now, but there will be a day when the Lord will draw out a straight thread for each man. To-day the wicked prosper, but God will turn their way upside down; and though the righteous be often under a cloud, he will bring forth their judgment as the noonday. Men respect an earthly judge; therefore, I pray you, stand in awe of the Judge of all the earth.

Do not forget also *that your God is almighty.* He has but to will it, and the strongest of us would be crushed more easily than a moth. There is no escaping from the Lord; neither the heights of Carmel nor the depths of the sea could afford shelter for a fugitive from the Lord. Neither can any resist him, for none have any power apart from him. You have heard his thunder, and trembled at the bolts of his lightning; behold how dreadful is God in arms! How dare you sin against a God so great? Stand in awe. Even holy Job, when he came near to the Lord, exclaimed, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." How can you feel him near and not be filled with awe?

Stand in awe of God because *he is infinitely good.* To me personally, some little time ago, the Lord drew very near in a most special and memorable providence. As I saw the hand of the Lord stretched out so marvellously, I felt my very flesh creep, not with alarm, but with a joyful awe of One who could work so tenderly and condescendingly for his tried servant. I knew that he was God by his marvellously gracious care over me, and nearness to my soul in adversity. Verily Jehovah is God, and a great King above all gods. He is to be had in reverence of them that are round about him. I know now why Jacob said at Bethel, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He was filled with a holy dread and solemn awe because God had been so near. I therefore say to you—stand in awe of God, because he is infinitely great and good. The illustration which I quoted from my own personal experience, I could not withhold, because it is, even at this hour, one of the most vivid recollections of my life. God has dealt with me very graciously. Oh, his great goodness! A sense of it is overwhelming. We fear and tremble for all the goodness which the Lord makes to pass before us. Think of sin forgiven, of righteousness imputed, of spiritual life imparted, of that life preserved, supplied,

nurtured. Think of providence with all mindful foresight, and abounding supplies. The love of God should make us reverent as angels, and humble as penitents. If the impudence of pride might dare to insult justice, yet it should scorn to injure love. There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared: his grace, if not his glory, should command the reverence of the most obdurate hearts. I pray you stand in awe of God, and sin not. If thoughts of this kind could but dwell in men's minds, they would surely perceive that sin is a great wrong to the Lord, and they would flee from it, crying like Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

My dear hearers, stand in awe in reference to *a future state*. You do not doubt the truth which the Holy Spirit has revealed, that when you die you will not cease to be. There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust: "for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." Oh, that all persons would remember this wherever they go! I have heard of a soldier—I think he was employed in the survey of Palestine—who was in the valley of Jehoshaphat, outside Jerusalem, and someone remarked that it was reported by some that this valley would be the scene of the last judgment, and in that place the multitudes would be gathered. The soldier, hearing this, said, "What a crowd there will be! I shall be there, and I will sit on this stone." He sat down to realize the scene, and his imagination acted so powerfully that he seemed to himself to be among the throng, and to behold the great white throne. He was seen to swoon, and fall to the ground. Do you wonder? If any one of us could, in our inmost souls, behold that scene, should we not be overcome? I wish I could so speak this morning that some of you would picture that last tremendous day, for which all other days were made. Behold that *dies iræ*, that day of wrath, that day when justice will sit upon the throne! Behold it by anticipation, for it will soon be upon you in very deed. As surely as you live, you will live again: and for every act on earth you must give an account in that last assize. Trifle not, for the Judge is at the door. We may hear his trumpets before this day is over. Let not this thought be driven from you; rather welcome it, and let it abide in your minds: if you were to think of nothing else for a time you might be justified, since it is of such overwhelming importance that you prepare for your final state. Shall a man live and never think of the end of life? Can a man think it wise to occupy himself with frivolities throughout the whole of his earthly existence? While he is shaping his eternal condition, will he do nothing else but sport? Will he never think of that day when his position shall be fixed by the verdict of the great Judge? O my dear hearers, do not forget that you have to live in a future state, and that you will see him who died upon the cross, seated on the throne, in that day when all nations shall be gathered before him, and he shall divide them, the one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. May the thought of the eternal reward also rest on your minds! Hear ye, even now, that word of the King to the righteous—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Hear, also, that dread sentence to those on his left hand, "Depart from me, ye

cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh, think of these things, and "stand in awe, and sin not"! This awe is one of the strongest moral disinfectants: use it largely. There is no fear of your having too much of it. He that has no fear of God before his eyes sins with a high hand, but awe of the Lord leads to purity of life.

II. In the second place, David admonished the ungodly to practise THOUGHTFUL SELF-EXAMINATION. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

I am not trying, my dear hearer, to preach a sermon this morning, but I am longing to take you by the hand, and to lead you in the right way. I pray the Holy Spirit to make you willing to follow my gentle guidance. My dear friend, you are now asked to *think about yourself*— "commune with your own heart." When once men choose the way of evil, they run in it with their eyes shut. They do not wish to consider; it is easier to go blindly on. They will think about their worldly concerns, their profits and losses, their pleasures and amusements; but they refuse seriously to consider their condition before God. O my friend, think of what you are, and where you are, what you have done, what you are doing, what it will all lead to! Are you such a fool that you will not consider? Then put on the cap and bells, and wear motley, and take to your proper trade. And yet, even if you were a merry-andrew, it would become you sometimes to be wise as well as merry, and to take a look into the future, lest you have to take a leap in the dark at last.

Especially think of the state of your heart. This is the vital point. Are you right with God? Do you serve your Maker? Have you truly repented of former sin? Have you fled to Christ as your refuge? Have you been born again? Are you the subject of sanctifying grace? "Commune with your own heart" upon these essential points. He that would have his face clean must look in a glass to see his spots; and he that would have his heart clean must gaze into the looking-glass of God's Word, that he may discover his secret faults. Your heart may be diseased while your cheek seems ruddy with health. Look within you, man, and be not deceived as to the fountain of your being. Have you really passed from death to life? Does the Spirit of God of a truth dwell in you? Such questions as these are all-important; I pray you answer them as before the living God, without partiality or negligence.

Think by yourself, alone, and in quiet. Oh, how I wish I could induce you to spend an hour or two closeted with yourself! "Commune with your own heart upon your bed," at that time when companions are out of the way; when the jest is silenced, and the common talk is hushed. Get by yourself, when you think of yourself, or it will be an impossible task. Choose the hour of night, when all is still around you, and darkness lends its solemnity. You can forego a little natural sleep, if thereby you may be aroused from the sleep of spiritual death. The bed and sleep are instructive emblems of the grave and death: they may aid you in the serious work of examining your hearts. Remember that, as you put off your clothes and go to your bed, so you must put off your body and quit the scene of life's activities; are

you ready for that undressing? Make your bed the place of your contrition, even as David did when he said, "All the night make I my bed to swim." The earth outside has its dews, let your heart have its tears.

Think by yourself, of yourself, and then *think for yourself*. You have been carried away by your companions; you have tried to think as they think. The general opinion of the age may have influenced you towards indifference. With a family round about you, you have looked at things too much in the light of business and personal benefit; but all this it will be wise to lay aside. As you will have to die alone, and to put in a personal appearance at the judgment-seat of Christ, it will be prudent to divest yourself of your surroundings, and "commune with your own heart." I commend this text most heartily to your immediate practice. If you are unsaved—think rather than sleep. The tendency of most men with regard to eternal things is to go to sleep, and let matters drift: I pray you do not so. I dare not let you take your rest while all is wrong with you. Sleep, if you like, in a house that is on a blaze; sleep, if you like, in a ship that is settling down, and rapidly sinking; but I charge you do not sleep while you are an unforgiven man, and your soul is nearing the eternal woe: "Commune with your own heart upon your bed": use your bed for seeking instead of sleeping. I remember the time when I dared not go to sleep, for fear I might wake up in hell. Many when under conviction of sin have at length resolved not to sleep until they found Christ. I wish that some such feeling as that would steal over you at this moment.

Keep on thinking *till you come to be still*. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, *and be still*." Do you know what that means? There comes a time with men whom God is saving when all grows quiet within them. Their old pleasures and desires are hushed; the voice of the outside world is still, and they hear in the silence of their souls "the still small voice" of conscience. Oh, that you were at this moment still enough to hear that warning note! Memory also commences her rehearsals: it tells of the past, and brings forgotten things before the soul. Oh, that all of you would remember and bethink yourselves that God requireth that which is past. Best of all, God speaks in the soul. It was at night, when young Samuel was on his bed, that the Lord said to him, "Samuel, Samuel"; and it is when the heart at last has grown still that God's voice of mercy is heard calling to the man by name. Oh, that in such a case you may have grace to answer, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"!

I beseech you, give yourselves space for thought, before thought becomes the worm of eternal misery to you. Remember, before you hear that voice from heaven which spoke to the rich man in hell, and said to him, "Son, remember." Ye slaves of fashion and frivolity, think, I pray you! Ye serfs of daily money-grubbing, rest a while, and hear what God the Lord shall speak to you! You can hardly hear the great bell of St. Paul's when the traffic is thundering around, but it sounds solemnly in the stillness of night. We who live in the more remote suburbs hear Big Ben of Westminster at night, but we seldom note it amid the stir and noise of the day. Do give an

opportunity for the eternal voices to pierce the clamours of the hour. Do, for God's sake, and for your soul's sake, hear what wisdom teaches concerning everlasting things! O Lord, give grace to my dear hearers, that they may consider their ways, and turn unto thy statutes!

III. Very briefly, let us note that David gives a third piece of advice, which in essence means APPROACH UNTO GOD ARIGHT—"Offer the sacrifices of righteousness."

Now, I do not quite know what David himself may have intended by it, but this is how I interpret it. Come to God; come to God in his own way; come as Israel came to the Tabernacle in the wilderness, bringing their sacrifices with them.

When they brought their sacrifices, the first thing they did was to lay their hand on the victim, and *make a confession of sin.* Come, then, with broken and contrite hearts unto the Lord. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Own your shortcomings and transgressions. Do not cloak or excuse your sins. Get to your chamber, and tell the Lord what you have done. Pour out your hearts before him: turn them upside down, as it were, and let all flow out, even to the dregs. Confess your pride and unbelief, your Sabbath-breaking, your dishonesty, your falsehood, your disobedience to parents, your every breach of the divine law; whatsoever you have done amiss, confess it before him, and thus go to him in the only way in which he can receive you, even as sinners owning your guilt.

Go also to the Lord with gracious desires to be rid of sin. Entreat reconciliation, saying, "I would no longer be what I have been. I throw down the weapons of my rebellion, I pluck out the plumes of my pride; O Lord, I stand before thee, guilty, and I pray thee forgive me, and then rid me of the tyrant evils which now rule me so terribly! Oh, that I may sin no more! If I have been a drunkard, help me from this day to relinquish the intoxicating cup; if I have been a swearer, wash out my mouth; may I, henceforth, speak nothing but that which will be acceptable to thee! If I have been unchaste, cleanse my mind, that I may keep my body pure!" In this way come to God with contrite hearts. How much do I long that you may draw nigh to God with true repentance and hearty resolves to conquer sin!

The main thing, however, is to bring unto the Lord *the offering which he has divinely appointed and provided.* You know what that is. There is one sacrifice of righteousness without which you cannot be accepted. Come to God by faith in Jesus Christ, plead the precious blood of atonement, and say, "My Lord, for his dear sake who died upon the tree, receive thy wanderer, and now be pleased to grant me that repentance and remission of sins which he is exalted to give." My hearers, am I talking so as to reach your hearts? If not, I do not want to talk any longer. I had far rather be silent lest I minister to your condemnation. Hearts that have forgotten your Lord till now, oh, may his Spirit constrain you to return to him this day through the sacrifice of Jesus! If you come through Christ, you will never be cast out. The Father will receive any sinner that pleads the name of Jesus; and Jesus is willing that you should plead his name. He died on purpose to be the propitiation for our sins: God grant that you may accept him as such!

Come to your God: this is the great necessity of the hour. Say, "I will arise, and go to my father." If the prodigal had said, "I will arise, and go to my brother," he would have made a great mistake, for the elder brother would have shut the door in his face. Even if his brother had been of a kinder sort, he could not have forgiven the transgressor: his father alone could do that. Come, then, to your God with earnest prayer; for it prevails with heaven. Come also with humble praise; for it is much that you are yet alive, and not yet cast into the pit. Come to your God and Father, with the resolve henceforth to render him your life's service, saying, "O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name!"

IV. I must now close with the fourth point, which is, in some respects, the most important of all: EXERCISE FAITH. When holy awe and thoughtful self-communion have led us to seek the Lord, then we are prepared for the great precept which follows. It is the command of the gospel in its Old Testament form: "Put your trust in the Lord." In whom should a man trust but in his God? It may seem reasonable to trust our fellow-creature; but, alas! man is a frail thing, and to lean upon him ensures a fall; it is, therefore, unreasonable to trust in the creature, but to rely upon the Creator is the dictate of pure reason. May God, the Holy Ghost, lead you at once to a childlike faith in our faithful God!

"Put your trust in the Lord." First, *trust him as willing to receive you*, to forgive you, to accept you, and to bless you. Are you despairing? Do you say, "There is no hope"? "Put your trust in the Lord." Are you saying, "I am without strength, and, therefore, cannot be saved"? Why not? "Put your trust in the Lord." Does the evil one say that God will not receive you? "Put your trust in the Lord," who is infinitely gracious, and full of compassion. He saith, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Surely, you may trust in him whose mercy endureth for ever.

Especially *trust in the Lord as he reveals himself in the person of his Son Jesus Christ.* In him you see love written out in capital letters. "Put your trust in the Lord" as having provided the one sacrifice for sin, whereby he has put away for ever all the sins of those who believe in him. God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth. Believe that the precious blood can make you whiter than snow, scarlet sinner as you are. Come with that daring trust which ventures all upon the bare promise of a faithful God. Say, "I will go in unto the King, and if I perish I perish." If you do not trust in Christ, you must be lost; therefore come and try the divine way of salvation. The Lord Jesus is God's unspeakable gift, freely bestowed on all who by faith receive him. Dare to grasp what God holds out to you as the one hope of your spirit. Put your trust in the Lord, I beseech you. By his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death and burial, by his glorious resurrection and ascension, I entreat you to trust the Son of God, who has once appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Trust in the Lord, next, *that by the work of his Holy Spirit he can*

renew you. The glorious Lord, who made the world out of nothing, can make something out of you yet. If you are given to anger, the Holy Spirit can make you calm and loving. If you have been defiled with impurity, he can make you pure in heart. If you have been grovelling, he can elevate you. I may be addressing a forlorn man, who thinks that nothing can be made of him. I tell you, you have no idea what God can do with you. He can put heavenly treasure in earthen vessels. He can set you at last among the heavenly choristers, that your voice, sweeter than that of angels, may be heard amongst their everlasting symphonies. He will even here put you among the children, and set you with the princes of his people. Believe that the Holy Ghost can create you anew, can raise you from your dead condition, and can make you perfect in every good work to do his will. Put your trust in the Lord for this.

In fine, "Put your trust in the Lord" *for everything.* Poor sinner, when you begin to trust God, you will look to him mainly to put away your sin; but when that boon is received, you may go on to trust him about all your affairs. You may look to him concerning your poverty, your sickness, your bereavements, your children, your business; you may trust him for time, and trust him for eternity; trust him about little things, trust him about great things. Once under the shadow of his wings you are covered altogether; nothing is left out in the cold. To trust in God is to be your perpetual business, "For the just shall live by faith."

My closing theme is this—it has been asserted by certain of the modern school that we preach up salvation by a simple intellectual operation—salvation by merely believing a certain doctrinal statement. This is their way of stating, or mis-stating, justification by faith, which we do assuredly preach, and preach most distinctly and confidently. We are not responsible for their caricatures of our teaching, but we would be moved thereby to be more and more explicit. As far as faith is an intellectual operation, it is simple enough; but simple faith is no trifle. Fire is a simple element, but it has a measureless power. Connected with faith there are forces of the mightiest kind for influencing character and purifying life. Faith is the surest of all sin-killers: in fact, its tendency is to extirpate sin. The moral and spiritual change which accompanies faith, and grows out of it, is of the most remarkable kind. Faith's work in the soul is something to be wondered at, and to be admired to all eternity.

For, mark, when a man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, when he believes that Jesus so died for him that he is effectually redeemed, when he believes that the Lord Jesus has cleansed him, and that he is saved, the result upon his heart and life cannot be common-place. So divine a persuasion operates upon his whole nature. *He is filled with adoring gratitude,* and that gratitude breeds an *intense love,* which fervent love sets itself to work for the glory of God by the purification of the soul for sin. "My Jesus died because of my sin," says the pardoned sinner, "therefore no sin shall abide in my heart. Away, O sin! Away, for ever." Some favourite sin cries, "Let me lodge within thee," but he cries, "It cannot be, for I love Jesus." Sin

slew our Saviour; how can we be on friendly terms with it? We hate it with perfect hatred. Sin pleadeth, "Is it not a little one?" But the grateful heart sees great evil in a little sin, since the great Father abhors all iniquity. If the little sin was not the spear which pierced the Lord, it helped to make the thorn-crown which tore his blessed brow, and therefore away with it, away with it.

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee."

Nothing creates more indignation and revenge against sin than a grateful sense of "free grace and dying love." Surely this is no mean help towards moral purification.

Faith in God is effective for the noblest ends upon the soul because *it elevates the mind.* The man who is hoping to be saved by his own works and efforts begins on earth and ends there; but the habit of looking up to God is in itself a blessing. It is something to have learned to look beyond this dunghill of fallen humanity, in which no one will ever find a pearl. It is something, I say, to wait upon God because your expectation is from him. Trust in the sacred Trinity teaches us to be familiar with higher and better things than we can find in ourselves, or in this poor world. A hold of heaven is a help towards drawing us there. I find that those who do not put their trust in the Lord are by no means spiritual men, nor men whose conversation is in heaven; but the faith which they despise puts our foot on that ladder the top of which reaches up to God.

Faith in God *brings new ideas of God's demands.* When we do not know God, we read his law, and judge it to be harsh. "This is too strict; this is too holy. How can we obey this hard law?" But when we have faith in God, we correct our estimate, and judge that these laws of our heavenly Father are all meant for our good. He only forbids what would harm us, and he only commands what is most truly for our benefit. By faith we look upon the law as a loving directory—a chart of life's voyage showing what channel to follow, and what rock to avoid. "His commandments are not grievous." He takes from us no real pleasure, and imposes no crushing burden. To form so much better an estimate of God's law is a great moral change, is it not? Must it not greatly affect the man's behaviour?

The man who puts his trust in the Lord *sees the pleasures of sin in a new light;* for he sees the evil which follows on them, by noting the agonies which they brought upon our Lord, when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree. Without faith a man says to himself, "This sin is a very pleasant thing, why should I not enjoy it? Surely I may eat this fruit, which looks so charming, and is so much to be desired." The flesh sees honey in the drink, but faith at once perceives that there is poison in the cup. Faith spies the snake in the grass, and gives warning of it. Faith remembers death, judgment, the great reward, the just punishment, and that dread word—eternity. Faith sees the end as well as the beginning. Faith, while the feast is going on, reminds the revellers of the reckoning. Faith

feels that she cannot buy the transient joys of earth at the countless cost of an immortal soul. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Faith destroys the power of temptation. When Satan says, "You are in trouble, and here is an easy way of escape: only do a little wrong, and you will get a great good." "No," says faith, "it is God's business to get me out of my trouble, and I will not go to the devil for his aid." "Ah!" says Satan, "everybody else does so!" Faith answers, "I have to do with nobody but God, and that which is right." Ah, brethren! if Satan should offer us all the kingdoms of this world if we would do his bidding, true faith would baffle him by saying, "What canst thou offer me? I have all these things already; for all things are mine in Christ Jesus my Lord." When faith is in its true place, covering the believer, all the wicked suggestions of the evil one are caught upon it and quenched by it, like fiery darts which fall upon a shield. We are preserved from temptation by the buckler of faith.

Moreover, faith is always attended with a new nature. That is a point never to be forgotten. No man has faith in God of a true kind unless he has been born again. Faith in God is one of the first indications of regeneration. Now, if you have a new and holy nature, you are no longer moved towards sinful objects as you were before. The things that you once loved you now hate, and, therefore, you will not run after them. You can hardly understand it, but so it is, that your thoughts and tastes are totally changed. You long for that very holiness which once it was irksome to hear of, and you loathe those very pursuits which were once your delights. When the Lord renews us it is not half done; it is a total and radical change. If there were no work of the Holy Spirit connected with faith, and if faith were nothing more than human assent to truth, we might be blameworthy for preaching salvation through it; but since faith leads the van in the graces of the Spirit of God, and turns the rudder of the soul, we are more and more concerned to place faith where God places it, and we say without hesitation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Remember you will thus be saved from the power of sin, and from the practice of sin by being saved from the love of sin. O brothers and sisters, I am not afraid to preach to you justification by faith alone! Look to Jesus and live! I would bid the sinner come to Jesus just as he is, and take him to be his complete salvation. We do not preach to you the hope of going to heaven, and yet keeping your sins: indeed, till sin is quitted, there can be no heaven. Our Lord Jesus has opened a hospital, and into it he receives all manner of sick folk; yet he does not receive them that they may continue sick, but that he may heal them, and make them whole. He receives the sinful that he may make them holy. He saves men by changing their natures, and infusing into them a heavenly life. Come, then, ye leprous in heart, come ye to him whose touch can make you clean! Come, ye with withered limbs, incapable of holy exercise: he can, with a word, restore you! Come hither, ye blind, for he will give you sight! Yea, rise, ye dead, for he shall give you life!

Repentance and remission are twin gifts which he is exalted to bestow. Come ye now to him, and receive out of his fulness!

The thought of death is constantly forced upon me by the largeness of this congregation, and the fact that there seldom passes a week but what some one among you is taken away. Soon your bodies will lie beneath the greensward, and your souls will be in the eternal state. In due time you will stand where your past will be revived; for the books shall be opened, and you will be judged out of the things which are written in those books. What a record you have written within the Book of remembrance, to be read aloud in that day! Oh, ye ungodly ones, what will you then do? Christ-rejecting sinner, how will you bear to hear those items read before the assembled world? If from this pulpit I were to read out certain incidents of your past lives, I do not suppose you would get up to go out, for that would convict you; but you would want to go very badly. How, then, will you endure to have your sins laid bare by the hand of God, while every eye beholds them? How will you bear that shame and everlasting contempt which will be the result of your true character being blazoned abroad? How infinitely good it will be if all your past offences shall be blotted out! How joyful to be wholly absolved by the Lord of pardons! If by believing in Christ Jesus you receive a change of nature, and live a different life, and stand at the last day accepted in the Beloved, what bliss it will be! What joy will be yours when Jesus comes, when his smile shall light up the universe, and when he shall acknowledge you before the angels of God! You were with him in his humiliation, you shall be with him in his exaltation; you loved him and served him here below, you shall sit upon his throne, and reign with him for ever and ever. Ah! then, whatever little you may have suffered for his sake will be as nothing in comparison with the exceeding weight of glory. Whatever struggling of heart and pain of soul you felt in escaping from the sin which enthralled you will be your joy when the result is seen in your eternal perfection. The bliss of beholding the face of our Beloved will be heaven enough for us. Even now I feel eager to quit this feeble body at the bare thought of being with the Bridegroom of my soul.

> "Mine eyes shall see him in that day,
> The God that died for me;
> And all my rising bones shall say,
> Lord, who is like to thee?"

May you and I behold our Redeemer when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms iii. and iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—18 (Vers. III.), 588, 525.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PETER'S RESTORATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 22ND, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."—Luke xxii. 60—62.

PETER had terribly fallen. He had denied his Master, denied him repeatedly, denied him with oaths, denied him in his presence, while his Master was being smitten and falsely charged; denied him, though he was an apostle; denied him, though he had declared that should all men forsake him, yet would he never be offended. It was a sad, sad sin. Remember what led up to it. It was, first, Peter's presumption and self-confidence. He reckoned that he could never stumble, and for that very reason he speedily fell. A haughty spirit goes before a fall. Oh, that we might look to the roots of bitter flowers, and destroy them! If presumption is flourishing in the soil of our hearts to-day, we shall soon see the evil fruit which will come of it. Reliance upon our firmness of character, depth of experience, clearness of insight, or matureness in grace, will, in the end, land us in disgraceful failure. We must either deny ourselves, or we shall deny our Lord; if we cleave to self-confidence, we shall not cleave to him.

Immediately, Peter's denial was owing to cowardice. The brave Peter in the presence of a maid was ashamed; he could not bear to be pointed out as a follower of the Galilean. He did not know what might follow upon it; but he saw his Lord without a friend, and felt that it was a lost cause, and he did not care to avow it. Only to think that Peter, under temporary discouragement, should play the coward! Yet cowardice treads upon the heels of boasting: he that thinks he can fight the world will be the first man to run away.

His sin also arose from his want of watchfulness. His Master had said to him, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" and no doubt there was more meaning in the words than appeared on the surface. The Lord several times said to him, "Pray, that ye enter not into temptation." The words were repeated with deep impressiveness, for they were greatly needed. But Peter had not watched: he had been warming his hands. He did not pray: he felt too strong in himself to be driven to special prayer. Therefore, when the gusts

of temptation came, they found Peter's boat unprepared for the storm, and they drove it upon a rock.

When Peter first denied his Master a cock crew. Peter must have heard that crowing, or he would not have communicated the fact to the evangelists who recorded it. But though he heard it, he was an example of those who have ears, but hear not. One would have thought that the warning would have touched his conscience; but it did not; and when the cock crowed a second time, after he had committed three denials, it might not have awakened him from his dreadful sleep if a higher instrumentality had not been used, namely, a look from the Lord Jesus.

God keep us free from this spirit of slumber, for it is to the last degree dangerous! Peter was under the direful influence of Satan, for it was a night wherein the powers of darkness were specially active. "This is your hour," said Jesus, "and the power of darkness." That same influence which assailed the Saviour unsuccessfully—for, said he, "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"—assailed Peter with sad result; for the evil one had something in Peter, and he soon found it out. The sparks from Satan's flint and steel fell upon our Lord as upon water; but Peter's heart was like a tinder-box; and when the sparks fell, they found fuel there. Oh, that we may be kept from the assaults of Satan! "Lead us not into temptation" is a necessary prayer; but the next petition is specially noteworthy—"but deliver us from the evil one." A man never gets anything out of the devil, even if he conquers him. You will find in combat with him that, even if you win the victory, you come off with gashes and wounds of which you will carry the scars to your grave. "All the while," says Mr. Bunyan, while Christian was fighting with Apollyon, "I did note that he did not so much as give one smile." Oh no! there is nothing to smile about when the arch-enemy is upon us. He is such a master of the cruel art of soul-wounding, that every stroke tells. He knows our weak places in the present, he brings to remembrance our errors in the past, and he paints in blackest colours the miseries of the future, and so seeks to destroy our faith. All his darts are fiery ones. It takes all a man's strength, and a great deal more, to ward off his cunning and cruel cuts. The worst of it is that, as in Peter's case, he casts a spell over men, so that they do not fight at all, but yield themselves an easy prey. Our Saviour said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Peter was as much under the power of Satan as corn is in the hand of the man who winnows it. He went up and down in that sieve like a helpless thing, and so passed from simple falsehood to plain denials of his Master with oaths and cursings.

I desire in this discourse to speak chiefly of Peter's restoration. Peter was down; but he was soon up again. One writer says the story should rather be called Peter's restoration than Peter's fall. His fall was soon over: he was like a little child learning to walk, scarcely down before his mother has him up again. It was not a continuance in a sin, like that of David, who remained for months without repentance; but it was the quick speech of a man carried

away by sudden temptation, and it was followed by a speedy repentance. Upon his restoration we are going to meditate.

It was brought about by two outward means. I like to think of the singular combination: the crowing of the cock, and a look from the Lord. When I come to preach to you, it almost makes me smile to think that God should save a soul through me. I may find a fit image of myself in the poor cock. Mine is poor crowing. But as the Master's look went with the cock's crowing, so, I trust, it will go with my feeble preaching. The next time you also go out to try and win a soul for Jesus, say to yourself, "I cannot do it: I cannot melt a hard, rebellious heart; but yet the Lord may use me; and if there come a happy conjunction of my feeble words with my Lord's potent look, then the heart will dissolve in streams of repentance." Crow away, poor bird: if Jesus looks whilst thou art crowing, thou wilt not crow in vain, but Peter's heart will break. The two things are joined together, and let no man put them asunder—the commonplace instrumentality and the divine Worker. Christ has all the glory, and all the more glory because he works by humble means. I trust that there will be this morning a conjunction of the weakness of the preacher with the strength of the Holy Spirit; so that stony hearts may be broken and God glorified.

This morning, first, *let us look at the Lord who looked;* and secondly, *let us look into the look which the Lord looked;* and then, thirdly, *let us look at Peter, upon whom the Lord looked.* We will be all the while looking: may our Lord look upon us. May his Holy Spirit work with his holy word!

I. First, LET US LOOK AT THE LORD, WHO LOOKED UPON PETER.

Can you picture him up there in the hall, up yonder steps, before the high priest and the council? Peter is down below in the area of the house warming his hands at the fire. Can you see the Lord Jesus turning round and fixing his eyes intently upon his erring disciple? What see you in that look?

I see in that look, first, that which makes me exclaim: *What thoughtful love!* Jesus is bound, he is accused, he has just been smitten on the face, but his thought is of wandering Peter. You want all your wits about you when you are before cruel judges, and are called upon to answer false charges; you are the more tried when there is no man to stand by you, or bear witness on your behalf: it is natural, at such an hour, that all your thoughts should be engaged with your own cares and sorrows. It would have been no reproach had the thoughts of our Lord been concentrated on his personal sufferings; and all the less so because these were for the sake of others. But our blessed Master is thinking of Peter, and his heart is going out towards his unworthy disciple. That same influence which made his heart drive out its store of blood through every pore of his body in the bloody sweat now acted upon his soul, and drove his thoughts outward towards that member of his mystical body which was most in danger. Peter was thought of when the Redeemer was standing to be mocked and reviled. Blessed be his dear name, Jesus always has an eye for his people, whether he be in his shame or in his glory. Jesus always has an eye for those for whom he shed his blood. Though now he reigns

in glory, he still looks steadily upon his own: his delight is in them, and his care is over them. There was not a particle of selfishness about our Saviour. "He saved others; himself he could not save." He looked to others, but he never looked to himself. I see, then, in our Lord's looking upon Peter, a wondrously thoughtful love.

I exclaim, next, *What a boundless condescension!* If our Lord's eye had wandered that day upon "that other disciple" that was known to the high priest, or if he had even looked upon some of the servants of the house, we should not have been so astonished; but when Jesus turns, it is to look upon Peter, the man from whom we should naturally have turned away our faces, after his wretched conduct. He had acted most shamefully and cruelly, and yet the Master's eye sought him out in boundless pity! If there is a man here who feels himself to be near akin to the devil, I pray the Lord to look first at him. If you feel as if you had sinned yourself out of the pale of humanity by having cast off all good things, and by having denied the Lord that bought you, yet still consider the amazing mercy of the Lord. If you are one of his, his pitying eye will find you out; for even now it follows you as it did Hagar, when she cried, "Thou God seest me." But oh, the compassion of that look! When first I understood that the Lord looked on me with love in the midst of my sin, it did seem so wonderful! He whom the heavens adore, before whose sight the whole universe is stretched out as on a map, yet passes by all the glories of heaven that he may fix his tender gaze upon a wandering sheep, and may in great mercy bring it back again to the fold. For the Lord of glory to look upon a disciple who denies him is boundless condescension!

But then, again, *what tender wisdom do I see here!* "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." He knew best what to do: he did not speak to him, but looked upon him. He had spoken to Peter before, and that voice had called him to be a fisher of men; he had given Peter his hand before, and saved him from a watery grave when he was beginning to sink. But this time he gives him neither his voice nor his hand, but that which was equally effectual, and intensely suitable, he lent him his eye: "The Lord looked upon Peter." How wisely doth Christ always choose the way of expressing his affection, and working our good! If he had spoken to Peter then, the mob would have assailed him, or at least the ribald crowd would have remarked upon the sorrow of the Master and the treachery of the disciple: our gracious Lord will never needlessly expose the faults of his chosen. Possibly no words could have expressed all that was thrown into that look of compassion. Why, brethren, a volume as big as a Bible is contained within that look of Jesus. I defy all the tongues and all the pens in the world to tell us all that our divine Lord meant by that look. Our Saviour employed the most prudent, the most comprehensive, the most useful method of speaking to the heart of his erring follower. He looked volumes into him. His glance was a divine hieroglyphic full of unutterable meanings, which it conveyed in a more clear and vivid way than words could have done.

As I think of that look again, I am compelled to cry out: *What divine power is here!* Why, dear friends, this look worked wonders.

I sometimes preach with all my soul to Peter, and, alas! he likes my sermon and forgets it. I have known Peter read a good book full of most powerful pleading, and when he has read it through, he has shut it up and gone to sleep. I remember my Peter when he lost his wife, and one would have thought it would have touched him, and it did, with some natural feeling; yet he did not return to the Lord, whom he had forsaken, but continued in his backsliding. See, then, how our Lord can do with a look what we cannot do with a sermon, what the most powerful writer cannot do with hundreds of pages, and what affliction cannot do with even its heaviest stroke. The Lord looked, and Peter wept bitterly. I cannot help thinking with Isaac Williams that there is a majestic simplicity in the expressions here used—"The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." The passage reminds us of that first of Genesis: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." As the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians, and troubled the Egyptians, so did he now look into Peter's heart, and his thoughts troubled him. Oh, the power of the Lord Christ! If there was this power about him when he was bound before his accusers, what is his power now that he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them? In that look there was divinity. The Son of God looked upon Peter: the text does not use the name Jesus, but it expressly says, "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." That divine look did the deed.

Let me beg you to note *what sacred teaching is here.* The teaching is of practical value, and should be at once carried out by the followers of Jesus. You, dear friend, are a Christian man or a Christian woman; you have been kept, by divine grace, from anything like disgraceful sin. Thank God it is so. I dare say, if you look within, you will find much to be ashamed of; but yet you have been kept from presumptuous and open sins. Alas! one who was once a friend of yours has disgraced himself: he was a little while ago a member of the church, but he has shamefully turned aside. You cannot excuse his sin; on the contrary, you are forced to feel great indignation against his folly, his untruthfulness, his wickedness. He has caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and has done awful mischief to the cause of righteousness. Now I know what will be suggested to you. You will be inclined to cut his acquaintance, to disown him altogether, and scarcely to look at him if you meet him in the street. This is the manner of men, but not the manner of Jesus. I charge you, act not in so un-Christlike a manner. The Lord turned, and looked on Peter; will not his servants look on him? You are not perfect like your Lord; you are only a poor sinful creature like your fallen brother. What! are you too proud to look at the fallen one? Will you not give him a helping hand? Will you not try to bring him back? The worst thing you can do with a backslider is to let him keep on sliding back. Your duty should be your pleasure, and your duty is to "restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, remembering thyself also, lest thou also be tempted." O brothers and sisters, it is a very little thing that has kept some of us from turning aside unto folly. One grain more and the scale would have turned in favour of a great fall. Our steps have

well-nigh slipped. When we are proud of our sure standing, the Lord may well be angry with us for our vanity, and he may justly say, "How can I endure this pride? I have taken great care of this man, and watched over him to keep him out of sin, and now he takes the credit of it all, and plays the great man, and fancies that he will be defiled if he associates with my poor wandering children." Which, think you, is worse in God's sight, the sudden fall into sin, or the long-continued pride, which boasts itself in the presence of the Lord, and looks contemptuously upon erring ones? It is not my office to become a measurer of sins; but I would earnestly enforce this plain duty: since our own Lord and Master looked on backsliding Peter, let us seek out our wandering brethren.

One more lesson: observe *what heavenly comfort is here:* "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter"; yes, Jesus looks upon sinners still. The doctrine of God's omniscience is far oftener set forth in a hard way than in a cheering way. Have you never heard a sermon from "Thou God seest me," of which the pith was—Therefore tremble, and be afraid? That is hardly fair to the text; for when Hagar cried, "Thou God seest me," it was because the Lord had interposed to help her, when she had fled from her mistress. It was comfort to her that there she also had looked after him that had looked upon her. There is a dark side to "Thou God seest me"; but it is not half so dark as it would be if God did not see us. It is true, O sinner, that God has seen your sin, and all the aggravations of it; but it is also true that as he sees your ruin, your misery, your sadness, he has compassion on you. He sees your sin that he may remove it, and make you clean in his sight. As the Lord looked upon Peter, so he looks upon you. He has not turned his back on you; he has not averted the gaze of his pity. He sees to the bottom of your heart, and reads all your thoughts. You have not to go about to find out God—he is looking upon you. "He is not far from every one of us"; he is within eyesight. You are to look to him; and if you do, your eyes will meet his eyes, for already he looks upon you.

I think we have gathered much from this brief look at the Lord who looked upon Peter. I doubt not that, had we more time and more insight, we should see greater things than these.

II. Now let us go on to the second point, and see whether we cannot gather still more instruction. LET US LOOK INTO THE LOOK WHICH THE LORD GAVE TO PETER. Help us again, most gracious Spirit!

That look was, first of all, *a marvellous refreshment to Peter's memory.* "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." What a sight it must have been for Peter! Our dear Master's face was that night all red from the bloody sweat. He must have appeared emaciated in body; his eyes weary with want of sleep, and his whole countenance the vision of grief. If ever a picture of the Man of Sorrows could have been drawn, it should have been taken at that moment when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. By torchlight and the flickering flame of the fire in the court of the hall of Caiaphas Peter saw a vision which would never fade from his mind. He saw the man whom he loved as he had never seen him before. This was he who

called him, when he was fishing, to become a fisher of men; this was he who bade him spread the net, and caused him to take an incredible quantity of fishes, insomuch that the boat began to sink, and he cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord"; this was he who had made him walk on the water, and at other times had rebuked the winds, and raised the dead. This was he with whom Peter had been upon the mount of transfiguration! Truly there was a wonderful change from the glistening whiteness of the mount to the ghastliness of that sad hour! Though the lineaments of that reverend face were distained with blood, yet Peter could tell that it was the selfsame Lord with whom he had enjoyed three years of intimate intercourse and tender unveiling. All this must in a moment have flashed upon poor Peter's mind; and I do not wonder that in the recollection of it all he went out and wept bitterly. He did love his Lord; his denial was not of the heart, but of the tongue; and, therefore, as all the grounds of his faith came before his mind anew, his heart was broken into a thousand pieces with grief that he should have been false to such a friend. Yes, that look awoke a thousand slumbering memories, and all these called upon the sincere heart of Peter to repent of its ungenerous weakness.

Next, that turning of the Master was *a special reminder of his warning words.* Jesus did not say it in words, but he did more than say it by his look. "Ah, Peter! did not I tell you it would be so? You said, 'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.' Did I not tell thee that before cock-crowing thou wouldst deny me thrice?" No rebuke was uttered; and yet the tender eye of the Lord had revealed to Peter his own extreme folly, and his Master's superior wisdom. Now he saw his own character, and perceived his Lord's discernment. It was a prophecy, and, like all other prophecies, it was understood after it was fulfilled. We read that "Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." It is clear, then, that our Lord's look was a special reminder of his former words: it stirred up Peter's mind by way of remembrance, and made him see how foolish he had been, and how inexcusable was his fault.

Surely it was, also, *a moving appeal to Peter's heart.* I bade you notice just now, in the reading of the chapter, that this story of Peter is singularly interwoven into the narrative of our Saviour's passion: it is so interwoven because it constitutes an essential part of that passion. We must not regard it as an accidental incident, it was part and parcel of that grief which he had to bear when he stood in our place and stead. It was written of old, "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered"; and this scattering of the sheep, of which Peter was a notable instance, was one of the bitter ingredients of our Redeemer's mental anguish. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me" is his complaint in the Psalm. When the Saviour showed himself to Peter with all those lines of grief upon his face, he seemed to say to him, "Canst thou deny me now? I am bound for thee, and dost thou deny me? I stand here to be adjudged to death for thee, and dost thou deny me? Now is the hour of mine agony, and dost thou deny me?" The Lord could not have looked at Peter without

creating strong emotion in the breast of the weak disciple who now found himself in so sad a plight. That look touched very tender cords. There was no need for a single word of appeal: that look sufficed to stir the deeps of Peter's nature.

What do you think that look chiefly said? My thought about it, as I turned it over, was this: when the Lord looked upon Peter, though he did refresh his memory, and make an appeal to his conscience, yet there was still more evidently *a glorious manifestation of love.* If I may be permitted humbly and reverently to read what was written on my Master's face, I think it was this: "And yet I love thee, Peter, I love thee still! Thou hast denied me, but I look upon thee still as mine. I cannot give thee up. I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and, notwithstanding all thine ill-conduct towards me, I am looking for thee, and expecting to receive thee. I have not turned my back on thee. Behold, I look towards thee with tender regard, foreseeing that thou wilt yet serve me, and prove the truth of thy devotion to me. Despair not, O Peter, for I will receive thee again, and thou shalt glorify me." Judging what would break my heart the soonest if I had thus denied my Master, it seems to me that I should be most affected by his saying to me, "And yet, despite thy sin, I love thee still." Love is the great heart-breaker. Immutable love is that divine hammer which breaks the rock in pieces. Though a man should have sinned himself into great hardness of heart, yet almighty love can soften him. Who can resist the charms of grace unchangeable? Sharper than a sword is a look of love: more fierce than coals of juniper are the flames of love. One said, the other day, speaking of a person who has gone awfully astray after having been a preacher of the Word, "If I did not believe in the doctrine of unchanging love I do not think I dare pray for him; but since I believe that God will bring him back again, I pray with humble confidence that he will be restored." That which is an encouragement to prayer for others will be a help towards our return if we have gone astray. I love to believe that my Lord will bring his wanderers back. O ye who are anxious to return to him, let this cheer you—"Yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him." This doctrine wins men back. There are wicked men who turn it into an argument for continuing in sin; but their damnation is just. True men will see, in the measureless and unchanging love of Christ, a reason which will put wings to their feet when they hasten back to him from whom they have gone astray.

Again: this look *penetrated Peter's inmost heart.* It is not every look that we receive that goes very deep. I look with eyes of deep affection at men from this pulpit, and I perceive that they know my meaning; but they soon shake it off. But our Saviour has an eye to which the joints and marrow are visible. He looks into the secret chambers of the soul; for his look is a sunbeam, and bears its own light with it, lighting up the dark places of our nature by its own radiance. Peter could not help feeling, for he was pricked in the heart by the arrow of Christ's glance. How many persons are affected by religion only in the head! It does not affect

their heart and life. I am grieved when I hear of some of you, who are regular hearers, and take pleasure in my preaching, and yet, after many years, you are not a bit better. You have had spasms of improvement, but they have ended in nothing. You go back to the mire after you have been washed. You are a hearer of the gospel, and yet a drunkard. Your voice is heard in a psalm, but it may also be heard in an oath. It is a shocking thing; but I have done my best. I can preach to your ears, but I cannot look into your hearts. Oh, that my Lord would give such a glance at you this morning as should dart light into you, and cause you to see yourself, and to see him, and then the tears would fill your eyes!

One fact may not escape our notice: our Lord's look at Peter was *a revival of all Peter's looking unto Jesus.* The Lord's look upon Peter took effect because Peter was looking to the Lord. Do you catch it? If the Lord had turned and looked on Peter, and Peter's back had been turned on the Lord, that look would not have reached Peter, nor affected him. The eyes met to produce the desired result. Notwithstanding all Peter's wanderings, he was anxious about his Lord, and therefore looked to see what was done with him. Even while he warmed his hands at the fire, he kept looking into the inner hall. His eyes were constantly looking in the direction of the Lord Jesus. While he wandered about among the maids and serving-men, and got talking to them, fool that he was; yet still he would perpetually steal a glance that way to see how it fared with the man he loved. He had not given up the habit of looking to his Lord. If he had not still, in a measure, looked to his Master, how would the look of Jesus have been observed by him? His eye must look through your eye to get to your heart. The remainders of faith are the sparks among the ashes of piety, and the Lord blows on these to raise a fire. If there is a poor soul here that, despite his backsliding, can yet feel, "I am trusting in Jesus, and if I perish, I will perish there," there is hope for that soul. If you have given up the outward forms of religion it is a grievous fault: but if you still inwardly look to the Crucified, there is something in you to work upon; there is an eye which can receive the look of Jesus. It is through the eye that looks to Jesus that Jesus looks, and lets fresh light and hope into the soul. Oh that you who have this lingering faith in the Lord may now receive a look from him which shall work in you a bitter, salutary, saving repentance, without which you can never be restored!

This look was altogether between the Lord and Peter. Nobody knew that the Lord looked on Peter, except Peter and his Lord. That grace which saves a soul is not a noisy thing; neither is it visible to any but the receiver. This morning, if the grace of God comes to any one of you in power, it will be unperceived by those who sit on either side of you in the pew: they will hear the same words, but of the divine operation which accompanies them they will know nothing: the eye of the Lord will not speak to them as it is speaking to the awakened one. Do you know anything of the secret love-look of the Lord Jesus?

The whole process may not have occupied more than a second of time. "The Lord turned, and looked on Peter." It took less time to do than it takes to tell. Yet in that instant an endless work was done,

How soon can Jesus change the heart! "He spake, and it was done:" I venture to alter that verse, and say, "He looked, and it was done." Lord, look on sinful Peter now! Work a miracle with thine eye! Even here, let some sinner look to thee because thou hast looked on him.

III. Now I must go to my third point: LET US LOOK AT PETER AFTER THE LORD HAD LOOKED AT HIM. What is Peter doing? When the Lord looked on Peter *the first thing Peter did was to feel awakened.* Peter's mind had been sleeping. The charcoal fire had not done him much good, the fumes of it are evil. The dust of Satan's sieve had got into his eyes. He was confused with very sorrow for his dear Master, whom he truly loved. Peter was hardly Peter that night. I think I had better say, Peter was too much Peter, and his mind had more of Peter's stone in it, than of Christ's flesh. He had forgotten that he was an apostle; he had forgotten that which he had declared when the Lord said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." Again, I remind you how significantly it is written, "*The Lord* turned, and looked upon Peter"; for it hints that Peter now saw his Lord's Deity through the veil of his humiliation and anguish. He had forgotten his Lord's Deity, and thus he had, in thought, denied his Lord. He was off the lines, and was in a sleepy state. He was what Paul calls "bewitched," and under the influence of a spiritual soporific, administered by Satan. The Lord's look brought him to his better self, and aroused all the spiritual life which had been dormant in him: "Peter remembered," and by this remembrance he was restored.

The next effect was, *it took away all Peter's foolhardiness from him.* Peter had made his way into the high priest's hall, but now he made his way out of it. He had not felt in any danger though in the worst of company. What did he care for the girl that kept the door? Surely he was too much of a man to mind her remarks. What did he care for the men that were round the fire? They were rough fellows, but he had been a fisherman, and quite able to cope with the priest's bailiffs. But now the brag is gone out of him. No sooner had Jesus looked upon him than Peter declined all further risks.

Now he shows the better part of valour, and with great discretion quits the dangerous society of the high priest's palace. Revival of grace in the heart is the death of presumption. The man who runs risks with his soul is not in a right state of mind. Perhaps the Saviour's glance conveyed a hint to Peter that he had no business where he was. It may have seemed to say to him, "You had better be gone from these surroundings." At any rate, that was the effect it produced. That palace in which the Lord fared so badly could not be a fit place for a disciple. To be warming himself at the fire was quite inconsistent for Peter while Jesus was being mocked of his enemies. A sight of the Lord Jesus makes many things seem incongruous which else might appear right enough. All Peter's daring vanished; he turned his back on maids and men, and went out into the darkness of the night. We do not hear of his coming near the cross: in fact, we hear no more of him till the resurrection morning,

for Peter was sensible enough to feel that he could not trust himself any more. He placed himself in the background, till his Lord summoned him to the front. I wish that some religious professors whose lives have been questionable had grace enough to do the same. When I see a man who has sinned grievously pushing himself speedily to the front, I cannot believe that he has a due sense of the evil he has wrought, or of his own unfitness to be in the place of peril.

Above all, shun the place where you have fallen. Do not linger in it for a moment. Go out, even though you leave the comfortable fire behind you. Better be in the cold than stay where your soul is in danger. Till Peter had received from the Lord's own mouth abundant assurance of his restoration to his office by the threefold charge to feed the sheep and lambs, we do not find him again in the forefront.

That look of Christ *severed Peter from the crowd.* He was no longer among the fellows around the fire. He had not another word to say to them: he quitted their company in haste. It is well for believers to feel that they are not of the world! They should flee out of Sodom. The Lord has severed us from the multitude by his divine choice, and the separation should be our choice.

Oh, that the arrows of the great Lord would this morning pierce some soul even as a huntsman wounds a stag! Oh, that the wounded soul, like Peter, would *seek solitude!* The stag seeks the thicket to bleed and die alone; but the Lord will come in secret to the wounded heart, and draw out the arrow. Alone is the place for a penitent. Out in the darkness is far better for you than around the fire, where coarse jokes are bandied while Christ is mocked. There must be confession and weeping alone. If Christ has looked upon you, you must get away from the men of the world, and indeed from all others; the solitude of your chamber will suit you best.

That look of Christ also *opened the sluices of Peter's heart:* he went out, and wept bitterly. There was gall in the tears he wept, for they were the washings of his bitter sorrow. Dear friends, if we have sinned with Peter, God grant us grace to weep with Peter. Many will think of Peter's wandering who forget Peter's weeping. Sin, even though it be forgiven, is a bitter thing; even though Christ may look away your despair he will not look away your penitence. "He went out, and wept bitterly." Oh, how he chided himself! "How could I have acted so!" How he smote on his breast, and sighed, "How can I ever look up? Yet is he very precious. That look forgave me; but I can never forgive myself." He remembered it all his life, and could never hear a cock crow without feeling the water in his eyes.

Yet I want you to notice that that look of Christ *gave him relief.* It is a good thing to be able to weep. Those who cannot weep are the people that suffer most. A pent-up sorrow is a terrible sorrow. The Lord touched a secret spring, and made Peter's grief flow out in floods; and that must have greatly eased him. I have frequently heard people say, "I had a good cry, and after that, I was able to bear it." People die of bursting hearts when no tears relieve them. I thank God for Peter that he could weep bitterly, for thus the

Holy Spirit came to him with comfort. O Master, look on some poor dry heart here—some poor heart that cannot feel its sinfulness, but would if it could—and give it feeling! Look on the heart which cannot repent, that is crying, "I would, but cannot feel contrition." Lord, thou didst make the rock yield water at the smiting of the rod, use thy poor stick of a servant this morning to smite the rocky heart, and let the waters of repentance flow out.

And now, to conclude, it *made Peter* as long as he lived, *ashamed to be ashamed.* Peter was never ashamed after this. Who was it that stood up at Pentecost and preached? Was it not Peter? Was he not always foremost in testifying to his Lord and Master? I trust that if any of us have been falling back, and especially if we have wandered into sin, we may get such a restoration from the Lord himself, that we may become better Christians ever afterwards. I do not want you to break a bone, I pray God you never may; but if you ever do, may the heavenly Surgeon so set it that it may become thicker and stronger than before. Courage was the bone in Peter which snapped; but when it was set, it became the strongest bone in his nature, and never broke again. When the Lord sets the bones of his people, they never break any more—he does his work so effectually. The man who has erred by anger becomes meek and gentle. The man who has erred by drink quits the deadly cup, and loathes it. The man who has sinned by shame becomes the bravest of the company.

O Lord Jesus, I have tried to preach thee this morning, but I cannot look with thine eye. Thou must look on erring ones thyself. Look, Saviour! Look, sinner! "There is life in a look AT the crucified One," because there is life in a look *from* the crucified One. May Jesus look, and the sinner look! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Matthew xxvi. 31—40, 69—75; John xviii. 15—27.

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PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON A THURSDAY EVENING.

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."—Luke xxii. 32.

PETER was to be sifted, so our Lord warned him; and Satan was to operate with the sieve. Satan had an intense desire to destroy Peter—indeed, he would like to destroy all the chosen of God—and therefore he desired to sift him as wheat, in the hope that he would be blown away with the husks and the chaff. To see a child of God perish would bring to the evil one a malicious joy, for he would have wounded the heart of God. If ever the fallen spirit can be happy, he would derive happiness from defeating the grace of God, and robbing the Lord Jesus of those whom he bought with his blood. "Satan hath desired to have you": it would be a satisfaction to him to have a believer in his power. He was anxious to get Peter into his clutches, to give him as tremendous a shaking as he could manage.

If Satan knows, as he no doubt does, concerning any one believer that he cannot quite destroy him, then he is especially anxious to worry him. If he cannot devour the chosen, he would at least defile them: if he cannot ruin their souls, he would break their quiet. As the Revised Version puts it, Satan even asks of God to have them that he may sift them as wheat. This is a curious statement, for it seems from it that the devil can pray; and that his petition may be granted him. The margin has it, "Satan hath obtained you by asking." The Lord may grant the request of the devil himself, and yet he would not prove thereby that he had any love towards him. The Lord's wisdom may grant Satan's desire, and in the very act overthrow his evil power. Let us not then stake our faith in the Lord's love upon his giving us the precise answer we desire, for what he gives to Satan he may see fit to deny to those whom he loves, and he may do so because he loves them.

It is a fact that the evil one is permitted to test the precious metal of God's treasury. The story in the Book of Job is no fiction, or piece of imagination. It is even so, that Satan desires to have choice ones

of God put into his power that he may test them—that he may torment them, that he may, if possible, destroy them. The Lord may permit this, as he did in the case of Job, and as he did in the case of the apostles, and specially in the case of Peter. He may grant the tempter's request and allow him to touch our bone and our flesh, and see whether we will hold to our God in mortal agony.

We are not bound to know God's reasons for what he does or permits. It is sometimes sinful to enquire into those reasons. What the Lord does is right; let that be enough for us who are his children. But we can see sometimes a reason why the saints should be sifted as wheat; for *it appertains unto wheat to be sifted, because it is wheat.* Sifting brings a desirable result with it: it is *for the saints' good* that they should be tried. Satan doubtless wishes that he may let the good seed fall to the ground and be destroyed; but God overrules it to separate the chaff from the wheat, and to make the wheat into clean grain, fit for storage in the King's granary. Satan has often done us a good turn when he has meant to do us a bad one. After all, he is only a scullion in God's kitchen to clean his vessels; and some of them have received special scouring by means of his harsh temptations. God also may find a reason for allowing his saints to be tempted of Satan, and that reason may have more relation to others than to themselves. They may have to be tested *for other people's good.* The testing of their faith is "more precious than that of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire," and part of its preciousness is its usefulness. The child of God under temptation, behaving himself grandly, will become a standing example to those who are around him. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job"; but ye never would have heard of the patience of Job if Satan had not sifted him. This great treasury of instruction, the Book of Job, and all the truth taught us by Job's example, comes to us through God's having permitted Satan to put forth his hand and to press the patriarch so sorely. We also may be afflicted not so much for ourselves as for others; and this may be remarkably the case in the instances of those of you whom God makes useful to a large circle of friends. You live for others, and therefore suffer for others. The whole of your lives will not be accounted for by yourselves, but by your surroundings. As a minister I may have to be tempted because temptation is one of the best books in a minister's library. As a parent you may need affliction, because a father without a trial can give no counsel to a tempted child. Public workers may have to be tried in ways which, to a private Christian, are unnecessary. Let us accept remarkable discipline if thereby we are qualified for remarkable service. If by the roughness of our own road we are trained to conduct the Lord's sheep along their difficult pathway to the pastures on the hill-tops of glory, let us rejoice in every difficulty of the way. If apostles, and men like Peter, had to be put into Satan's sieve while they were being trained for their life-work, we may not hope to escape.

Observe, dear friends, what came before the sifting and went with the sifting. Note well that blessed "but." "*But I have prayed for thee.*" Not, "Thy brethren have prayed for thee." Not, "Thou hast prayed for thyself." But, "*I* have prayed for thee." Jesus, that

master in the art of prayer, that mighty pleader who is our advocate above, assures us that he has already prayed for us. "I have prayed for thee," means—Before the temptation I have prayed for thee. I foresaw all the danger in which thou wouldst be placed, and concerning that danger I have exercised my function as high priest and intercessor. "I have prayed for thee." What a divine comfort is this to any who are passing through deep waters! You only go where Jesus has gone before you with his intercession. Jesus has made provision for all your future in a prayer already presented: "I *have* prayed for thee." You may be much comforted by the prayers of a minister, or of some Christian man who has power with God; but what are all such intercessions compared with the praying of your Lord? It were well to have Noah, Samuel, and Moses praying for us, but better far to have Jesus say, "I have prayed for thee." Blessed be God, Satan may have his sieve, but as long as Jesus wears his breastplate we shall not be destroyed by Satan's tossings.

Notice that the principal object of the prayer of our Lord was, "*that thy faith fail not.*" He knows where the vital point lies, and there he holds the shield. As long as the Christian's faith is safe the Christian's self is safe. I may compare faith to the head of the warrior. O Lord, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle, for thou hast prayed for me that my faith fail not. I may compare faith to the heart, and the Lord holds his shield over the heart that we may not be injured where a wound would be fatal. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Faith is the standard-bearer in every spiritual conflict; and if the standard-bearer fall, then it is an evil day: therefore our Lord prays that the standard-bearer may never fail to hold up his banner in the midst of the fray: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." If faith fails, everything fails: courage fails, patience fails, hope fails, love fails, joy fails. Faith is the root-grace; and if this be not in order, then the leafage of the soul, which shows itself in the form of other graces, will soon begin to wither. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

Learn a lesson from this, my brother—that you take care to commend your faith unto your God. Do not begin to doubt because you are tempted: that is to lay bare your breast. Do not doubt because you are attacked: that is to loosen your harness. Believe still. "I had fainted," said David, "unless I had believed." It must be one thing or the other with us; believing, or fainting; which shall it be? "Above all, taking the shield of faith." Not only taking it so that it may cover all, but making this the vital point of holy carefulness. Watch thou in all things, but specially guard thy faith. If thou be careful about one thing more than another, above all be careful of thy faith. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Our Saviour's pleading goes to the point, and thus it teaches us where to direct our own desires and our own prayers. He asks for us far more wisely than we shall ever learn to ask for ourselves: let us copy his petitions.

Therefore it follows because of Christ's prayer that, though Peter may be very badly put to it, yet he shall be recovered, for Christ speaks of it as of an assured fact—"*When thou art converted.*" As much as to say—When thou comest back to thy old life and thy

old faith, then exercise thyself usefully for thy Lord. He speaks of Peter's restoration as if it were quite sure to be. And is it not quite sure to be? If Jesus, the Beloved of the Father, prays for his people, shall he not win his suit with God? He will win it! He will uplift Peter from among the siftings where Satan has thrown him. We are sure he will, for in prospect thereof, he sets him a loving and suitable task: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." The establishment and confirmation of all the rest are to hinge upon the setting up in his place of poor thrice-denying Peter.

Now, beloved friends, I may be addressing a number of persons who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Peter did, but they have fallen into a bad state, and need a new conversion. I am very sorry for you, but I am by no means staggered at the sight of you, for you belong to a numerous class. When sitting to see enquirers I am constantly stumbling on backsliders, who come back very sincerely and very truly, and feel right pleased to find a Christian home again. I meet with many who have been outside in the world, some of them, for years, attending the house of God very irregularly, and seldom or never enjoying the light of God's countenance. They have wandered so that none can tell whether they are the Lord's or not, except the Lord himself, and he always knoweth them that are his. I bear happy witness that the Lord brings his own back again. Though the Lord's sheep stray, yet the Good Shepherd finds them. Though the Lord's children go into the far country, yet they each one in due time say, "I will arise, and go to my Father." It is not every prodigal that returns, but only the prodigal *son*. In due time, the son returns to the Father's house. It is not every bit of stuff that falls on the ground that is found again; but the woman's piece of money is sure to be discovered. She will not lose it: it is hers, and she values it; she sweeps the house, and makes any quantity of dust until she finds it. The Lord will find his own, even though Satan tries to prevent the gracious discovery.

It may be, some of you have wandered into error. May you be brought back very speedily; and if you are, we are going to say to you to-night, "Strengthen your brethren." Possibly there has been a general decay in grace within your soul; you have lost your joy, your peace, your love, your zeal. This is sad; may the Lord restore you in answer to the prayer of him that redeemed you; and then, when you are converted, seek to recover your brethren from the decay of their graces which has also injured them. You will not be converted in quite the same sense as you were at first, but yet you will be turned again to your old life, and hope, and then you are to strengthen your brethren by aiming at their restoration to their first love and earliest zeal. Perhaps you have been neglectful. I find that many who were good Christian people in the country, always at the house of prayer, and walking near to God, will come up to this wicked London to live, and the change is a serious injury to them. They get lost to Christian society, and by degrees they become deteriorated by the ungodliness of this modern Sodom. Nobody in the street wherein they live ever goes to a place of worship, and they do not know anybody at the chapel, or at the church, and so they give up going to public worship, and fall into the ways and habits of the ungodly world,

They are not happy. God's children never are happy when they leave their Father. If you have ever eaten the white bread of heaven, you will never rest content with the black ashes of earth. If the flavour of Christ's love has once been in your mouth, you are spoiled for a worldling. You will not make an expert sinner now, for your hand is out of it. Once converted, you must be a child of God, or nothing. You are ruined for this world; and if the world to come is not yours, where are you? The devil himself will not like you long: you are not of his sort. There is a something about you that will not suit Satan any more than Jonah suited the whale. The whale was quite as glad to part with Jonah as Jonah was to be set free from the whale. I see arrangements for your coming home again. The Lord deviseth means that his banished shall not perish: those tokens of disquiet, those startings in your sleep, those horrible forebodings, those inward hungerings, are all pulling at you to come home. You have been trying to feed upon the dust which is ordained to be the serpent's meat, and if the Lord had not loved you, you would have done so. A deceived heart has turned you aside, but in love to your soul the Lord has made you aware of it, and your cry is, "I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now." These are tokens by which I am assured that the Lord will bring his own back. I rest confident that he will turn them, and they shall be turned; and I am going to talk to backsliders about what they are to do when they do come back again.

We are going to take it for granted that they will come back, and to speak to them now about what it is their privilege to attempt under such gracious circumstances. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." First, *it is the restored man's duty;* secondly, *he has a special qualification for it;* and thirdly, *it will be a great blessing to him to set about it.*

I. First, it is HIS DUTY. He has gone astray, and he has been brought back; what better can he do than to strengthen his brethren?

He will thus help to undo the evil which he has wrought. Peter must have staggered his brethren. Some of them must have been quite frightened at him. John soon looked after him, but then they were not all Johns. Full of love, John soon hunted up Peter; but the others must have felt that he was a mere reed shaken by the wind. It must have staggered the faith of the weaker sort to see that Peter, who had been such a leader among them, was among the first to deny his Lord. Therefore, Peter, you must build what you have thrown down, and bind up what you have torn! Go and talk to these people again, and tell them how foolish and weak you were. Warn them not to imitate your example. You must henceforth be more bold than anybody else, that you may in some measure undo the mischief which you have done.

Now, do think of this, any of you who have been cold towards the Lord. You have wasted months, and even years, in backsliding. Try to recover lost ground. It will be almost impossible for you to do it, but do at least make a serious attempt. If anybody has been staggered by your backsliding, look after him, and try to bring him back, and strengthen him. Ask his pardon, and beg him to recover

the strength of which you helped to rob him. This is the least that you can do. If almighty love has drawn you back again after sad wanderings, lay yourself out with all your heart to do good to those who may have been harmed by your sad turnings aside. Am I asking more of you than simple justice demands?

Besides, *how can you better express your gratitude to God* than by seeking to strengthen your weak brethren when you have been strengthened yourself? After our first conversion, you and I were found seeking earnestly after sinners like ourselves. We had been newly brought out of the house of bondage, and we longed to lead other slaves into the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. This, I say, we ought to do when first brought to Jesus' feet; but if, to our disgrace, we have turned aside, and have backslidden; and if, to God's infinite glory, he has restored our souls, and made us strong again, then we ought to renew our zeal for the salvation of others, and we ought to have a special eye to backsliders like ourselves. We should say, "Lord, I will show how much I thank thee for restoring me, by endeavouring to find any that have been overtaken in a fault, that I may restore such in the spirit of meekness, remembering myself also, since I have been tempted, and have not stood against the temptation." Those of you whom the Good Shepherd has restored should have a quick eye for all the sickly ones of the flock, and watch over these with a sympathetic care. You should say, "This is the field which I shall try to cultivate. Because in my spiritual sickness the Lord has been pleased to deal so graciously with me, I would therefore lay myself out to cherish others who are diseased in soul."

Do you not think, too, that this becomes our duty, because, *doubtless, it is a part of the divine design?* Never let us make a mistake by imagining that God's grace is given to a man simply with an eye to himself. Grace neither begins with man nor ends with him with an object confined to the man's own self. When God chose his ancient people Israel, it was not merely that Israel might enjoy the light, but that Israel might preserve the light for the rest of the nations. When God saved you, he did not save you for your own sake, but for his own Name's sake, that he might through you show forth his mercy to others. We are windows through which the light of heavenly knowledge is to shine upon multitudes of eyes. The light is not for the windows themselves, but for those to whom it comes through the windows. Have you ever thought enough about this? When the Lord brings any of you back from your backsliding, it is decidedly with this view—that you may be qualified to sympathize with others and wisely guide them back to the fold. All your history, if you read it aright, has a bearing upon your usefulness to your fellow-men. If you have been permitted, in an hour of weakness, to grow cold, or turn aside, and if the Lord, in unspeakable compassion, has restored you to his ways, surely this must be his motive—that you may afterwards strengthen your brethren.

By the way, the very wording of the text seems to suggest the duty: we are to strengthen our "brethren." We must do so *in order that we may manifest brotherly love, and thus prove our sonship*

towards God. Oh, what a blessed thing it is when we come back to God, and feel that we are still in the family! That was the point which we debated with ourselves: we feared that we were not the Lord's. Whatever some may say about that hymn—

> "'Tis a point I long to know,
> Oft it causes anxious thought."

I do not give much for the man who has not sometimes had to sing it in the minor key. It is a pity that he ever should have to sing it; he will not if he walks before the Lord with care and watchfulness; but when he has been a naughty child, when his life has not been what it should be, if he does not doubt himself we must take leave to doubt for him. How can he help asking—

> "Do I love the Lord or no?
> Am I his or am I not?"

I am inclined to say with a good experimental writer—

> "He that never doubted of his state,
> He may—perhaps he may too late."

It is not an ill thing to try yourselves, and see whether your faith is gold or dross. To have a question about your position in the heavenly family is a very painful thing, and should not be endured one moment if it be in our power to solve the doubt. But if the Lord has brought you back as his child, you now know that you belong to the family, and it will be suggested at once to you to do something for *the brethren.* Naturally, you will look around to see whether there be any child of God to whom you can show favour for his Father's sake. You have injured all by your backsliding; and hence it is your duty, when restored to the family, to benefit them all by special consecration and double earnestness. Let it be your delight, as well as your duty, to strengthen your brethren. Prove that you are a brother by acting a brother's part; and claim your privilege as a child, and exercise it as a child should, by helping another child that is in need. I think that the text within itself contains this argument.

Let us see to it, dear friends, if we have been restored, that we try to look after our weak brethren, *that we may show forth a zeal for the honour and glory of our Lord.* When we went astray we dishonoured Christ. If any of these others go astray they will do the same. Therefore let us be watchful, that if we can we may prevent their being as foolish as we have been. Let us learn tenderness from our own experience, and feel a deep concern for our brethren. If one member of this church sins we all suffer—in our reputation, at any rate; and, specially, the best known among us have to bear a great deal because of the inconsistency of this person and of that. Do you want us to be wounded through you? My beloved friends, I do not think that one of you would wish to cast reproach upon your minister. Alas! Christ himself suffers. His worst wounds are those which he receives in the house of his friends. Peter, if you ever denied your Master, mind you look well to others who are growing presumptuous as you were before your great sin. If you meet anyone who is beginning to

say, "I will go with thee to prison, and to death," give him a gentle jog, and say, "Mind, brother; you are going near a nasty hole into which I once fell. I pray you take warning from me." If you speak experimentally, you will have no cause to boast, but you will find in your own sin a reason why you should tenderly guard your brethren lest they should cause like dishonour to that dear Name which is more precious, I hope, to you than life itself. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." It is your duty.

II. Now secondly, HE HAS A QUALIFICATION FOR IT. This Peter is the man who, when he is brought back again, can strengthen his brethren. He can strengthen them by telling them of *the bitterness of denying his Master*. He went out and wept bitterly. It is one thing to weep; it is another thing to weep bitterly. There are sweet tears, as well as salt tears; but oh, what weeping a sin costs a child of God! I recollect a minister speaking very unguardedly: he said that the child of God lost nothing by sin except his comfort; and I thought, "Oh dear me! And is that nothing? Is that nothing?" It is such a loss of comfort that, if that were all, it would be the most awful thing in the world. The more God loves you, and the more you love God, the more expensive will you find it to sin. An ordinary sinner sins cheaply: the child of God sins very dearly. If thou be the King's favourite, thou must mind thy manners, for he will not take from thee what he will take from an enemy. The Lord thy God is a jealous God, because he is a loving God. He has such love for his own chosen that, if they turn aside, his jealousy burns like coals of juniper. May God keep us from ever provoking his sacred jealousy by wandering at any time into any kind of sin. Now Peter, because he could tell of the bitterness of backsliding, was the man to go and speak to anyone who was about to backslide, and say, "Do not so, my brother; for it will cost you dear."

Again, Peter was the man to tell another of *the weakness of the flesh*, for he could say to him, "Do not trust yourself. Do not talk about never going aside. Remember how I talked about it. I used to be very lofty in my talk and in my feelings, but I had to come down, I felt so sure that I loved my Lord and Master, that I put great confidence in myself, and could not think that I should ever wander from him. But see, see how I fell. I denied him thrice ere the time called cock-crowing." Thus, you see, Peter was wonderfully qualified, by having known the bitterness of sin, and by feeling the weakness of his own flesh, to go and strengthen others in these important points.

But he was also qualified to bear his personal witness to *the power of his Lord's prayer*. He could never forget that Jesus had said to him, "I have prayed for thee." He would say to any brother who had grown cold or presumptuous, "the Lord Jesus prayed for me, and it was because of his prayer that I was preserved from going farther, so that I was led back, and delivered from the sieve of the Evil One." Do you not think that this would strengthen any trembling one when Peter mentioned it. It is wonderful how men and women are helped by those who have had a similar experience to themselves. Theory is all very well, but to speak experimentally has a singular power about it. How one can comfort the bereaved if one has been bereaved

himself! but how little can the young and inexperienced yield of consolation to those who are greatly tried, even though they are anxious to do so! And so, brethren, if the Lord has blessed you, and remembered you in his great mercy, and you know the power of the prayer of the great Intercessor, you can strengthen your brethren by reminding them of the perseverance of the Saviour's love.

And could not Peter speak about *the love of Jesus to poor wanderers?* The Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and that look broke Peter's heart, and afterwards the Lord spoke to Peter by the sea, and said to him, "Feed my sheep, and feed my lambs." O beloved, Peter would always remember that, and he would speak of it to any whom he found in a sad and weary condition. He would say, "My Lord was very good to me, and was willing to receive me back. Nay, he did not wait until I came back, but he came after me. He sent after me, saying, Go tell my disciples *and Peter;* and when he saw that I was penitent, he never rebuked me, except in such a gentle side-way that I was rather comforted than rebuked by what he said." Oh, you that have wandered, and Christ has restored you, comfort the wanderers when you see their tears! When you hear any word of doubt, or anything like despair from them, tell them that there is no truth in the suggestion of Satan that Christ is unwilling to forgive. Beseech them not to slander that dear heart of love, which is infinitely more ready to melt towards the penitent than the penitent's heart is to melt towards it. You know it. You know that you can speak not only what you have read in the Bible, but what you have felt in your own heart. You are qualified, therefore, to strengthen your brethren.

And could not Peter fully describe *the joy of restoration?* "Oh," he would say, "do not wander. There is no good in it. Do not go away from Jesus. There is no profit to be found there. Come back to him: there is such peace, such rest with him. Never, never go away again." Peter ever afterwards in his epistles—and we are sure that it must have been the same in his spoken ministry—would testify to the love and goodness of Christ, and urge the saints to steadfastness in the faith. I would appeal to any child of God here whether he ever gained anything by going away from Christ. No, brothers and sisters, the old proverb says that honesty is the best policy, but I will turn it to a higher use, and say, "Holiness is the best policy." Communion with Christ is the happiest life. If you gained all the world and did not lose your soul, but only lost the light of Christ's countenance for a few days, you would make a poor bargain. There is heaven in every glance of his eye. There is infinite joy in every word of his mouth when he speaks comfortably to his servants. Go not away from him. Be like Milton's angel, who lived in the sun. Abide in Christ, and let his words abide in you. Closer, closer, closer, this is the way to spiritual wealth. To follow afar off, and live at a distance from Christ, even if it does not make your soul to perish, yet it will wither up your joys, and make you feel an unhappy man, an unhappy woman. Therefore, all those who have tried it should bear their witness, and put their experience into the scale as they thus strengthen their brethren.

III. And now, lastly, the restored believer should strengthen his

brethren, because IT WILL BE SUCH A BENEFIT TO HIMSELF. He will derive great personal benefit from endeavouring to cherish and assist the weak ones in the family of God.

Brother, do this continually and heartily, for thus you will be *made to see your own weakness.* You will see it in those whom you succour. As you see how they doubt, or grow cold, or become lukewarm, you will say to yourself, "These are men of like passions with myself. I see which way I shall drift unless the grace of God sustains me." It will lead you to throw out another anchor, and get a fresh hold, as you see how they yield to the tide. One man is wonderfully like another man, only that other men are better than we are; and when we are trying to strengthen them, we are not to look upon ourselves as superior beings, but rather as inferior beings, and say, "He fell yesterday, I may fall to-day; and if I do not fall to-day, I may to-morrow." All the weaknesses and follies you see in others, believe that they are in yourself, and that will tend to humble you. I think that a true minister is often excited to better work by what he sees of weakness in his people, because he says to himself, "Am I feeding this flock well?" Perhaps he thinks to himself, "If I had properly tended them they would not have shown all these weaknesses"; and then he will begin to blame his own ministry, and look to his own heart, and that is a good thing for us all. We very seldom, I think, blame ourselves too much, and it is a benefit to us to see our own failings in others.

But what *a comfort* it must have been to Peter *to have such a charge committed to him!* How sure he must have felt that Jesus had forgiven him, and restored him to his confidence, when the Lord, having asked him, "Lovest thou me?" said to him, "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs." Peter is all right again, or else Christ would not trust lambs to him. Peter must be all right, or else Jesus would not put the sheep under his care. It is a grand proof of our being fully restored to the divine heart, when the Lord entrusts us with work to do for his own dear children. If you and I are made the means of strengthening our brethren, what a comfort it will be to our hearts! I know that it is not the highest form of comfort, for Jesus would say of it, "Rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven"; but still to a loving child of God it is no mean consolation to find that God is using him. I know, for my own part, that when I go to see our friends who are ill, and near to die, it is a supreme consolation to see how calm they always are, without any exception; yes, and how joyful they generally are—how triumphant in the departing hour! Then I say to myself, "Yes, my Master has owned my ministry." The seals of fresh conversions are very precious, but the surest seals are these dying saints, who have been nurtured in the gospel that we have preached. They prove the truth of it, for if they do not flinch when they stand looking into eternity, but even rejoice in the prospect of meeting their Lord, then what we preach is true, and our Master has not left us without witness. So you see that it is a great benefit to a man to strengthen his brethren, because it becomes a comfort to his own soul.

And, brethren, whenever any of you lay yourselves out to strengthen weak Christians, as I pray you may, *you will get benefit from what you do in the holy effort.* Suppose you pray with them. Well, then, you will pray a little more than if you only prayed for yourself; and anything that adds to your prayerfulness is a clear gain. I wish that you had the habit of making everybody pray with you that comes to your house, saying to them, "Now we have done our little business, let us have a word or two of prayer." Some even of God's people would look at you. It will do them good to look at you, and learn from you the blessed habit. With regard to those who are strangers to divine things there will often occur opportunities in which you have put them under an obligation, or they have come to you in trouble to ask advice, and then you may boldly say, "Do not let us part till we have prayed." We used to have an old member of this church who used to pray in very extraordinary places. Two women were fighting, and he knelt down between them to pray, and they gave over fighting directly. Before a door when there has been a noise in the house he has begun to pray. He was better than a policeman, for his prayer awed the most obstinate. They could not understand it: they thought it a strange thing, and they did not care to put themselves into direct opposition to the man of God. There is a wonderful power in prayer to bless ourselves, besides the blessings that it will bring upon others. Pray with the weak ones, and you will not be a weak one yourself.

Well, then, your example. If you use your example to strengthen the weak—if you carefully say to yourself, "No, I shall not do that because, though I may do it, I may do injury to some weak one"—this will do you good. If you hesitate, if you draw back from your own rights, and say, "No, no, no; I am thinking of the weak ones"—you will get good from that self-denial. If the poor, trembling, wandering backslider is much upon your mind, you will often be very tender how you act. You will look to see where your foot is going down next time, for fear of treading upon somebody or other; and in that way you will be winning for yourself the great gain of a holy carefulness of walk and conversation—no small gain to you.

And again, suppose that in trying to strengthen these weak ones, you begin to quote Scripture to them—quote a promise to them—this will bless you. Some of you do not know which promise to quote. You do not even know where to find it in the Word. But if you are in the habit of studying Scripture with a view to strengthening the weak, you will understand it in the best way, for you will get it in a practical form and shape. You will have the Bible at your fingers' ends. Moreover, one of these days the text that you looked out for old Mary will suit yourself. How often have we paid Paul with that which we meant to give to Peter! We have ourselves fed on the milk we prepared for the babes. Sometimes what we have laid up for another comes in handy for ourselves. We strangely find that we ourselves have been fed while we were feeding others, according to that promise, "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

Now, I have said all this to you that have wandered and come back, and I want to say it right home to you. May the Holy Spirit speak

to your inmost souls. You know who you are, and how far all this applies to you. The Lord bless you.

But, dear friends, if you have not wandered, if the Lord has kept you these twenty years close to him, and given you the light of his countenance all that time, then I think that you and I, and any of us of that sort, ought to strengthen our brethren still more. Oh, what we owe to sovereign grace! To be kept from wandering—what a blessing is that! Let us feel that instead of having a small debt to pay, we have a greater debt to acknowledge. Let us wake up to strengthen our brethren. I ask this of you, members of the church; because, in so large a church as this, unless there is a kind of universal mutual pastorate, what can we do? You that are converted, I beseech you to strengthen your brethren.

And then, once more, if all this ought to be done to those who are in the family, what ought we not to do for those outside—for those that have no Christ and no Saviour? If you are converted yourself, seek the salvation of your children, of your own brothers and sisters, and of all your household. Try to bring in your neighbours to hear the word. Get them, if you can, under the sound of the gospel. Why should we not fill up on Thursday night till the uppermost gallery is full? There are some friends up there to-night, and I am glad to see them. May God bless them. I hope that the day will come when every seat will be occupied there, so that when we are preaching the gospel we may scatter it broadcast, and find a field upwards as well as downwards where the seed may fall. Oh for a blessing! May we meet in heaven to praise the Lord our God. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xxii. 19—46.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—211, 23 (Vers. I.), 166.

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THE WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS OF GOD IN BLESSING HIS PEOPLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 29TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul."—Jeremiah xxxii. 41.

WE cannot help looking for the restoration of the scattered Israelites to the land which God has given to them by a covenant of salt: we also look for the time when they shall believe in the Messiah whom they have rejected, and shall rejoice in Jesus of Nazareth, whom to-day they despise. There is great encouragement in prophecy to those who work among the seed of Israel; and it is greatly needed, for of all mission fields it has been commonly represented to be one of the most barren, and upon the work the utmost ridicule has been poured. God has, therefore, supplied our faith with encouragements larger than we have in almost any other direction of service. Let those who believe work on! Those who believe not may give it up. They shall not have the honour of having helped to gather together the ancient nation to which our Lord himself belonged; for be it never forgotten that Jesus was a Jew. If we, who are branches of the wild olive, have been engrafted into the good olive, how much more easy shall it be, when God wills it, that the natural branches, which for a while were cut off because of unbelief, should be again grafted into their own native stock! God send it speedily! Oh, that it were so even now! May the house of Israel look on him whom they have pierced, and turn unto him with all their hearts. At present we have to say and sing—

"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
A remnant weak and small;
Hail him who saves you by his grace,
And crown him Lord of all."

It is a rule, in interpreting the Word of God, that the promises made to the natural Israel, so far as they are spiritual, belong to the spiritual Israel. Believers in Christ are the true seed of Abraham. "Though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Sara acknowledge us not," after the flesh, yet Abraham is the father of the faithful; and they that are faithful justly claim him to be their father. They that are of faith

are of the spiritual seed of Abraham, who believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. The covenant made with Abraham is a covenant made with all who are in Abraham, with all the seed born according to promise, as was Isaac; and we may lay hold, without doubt or hesitancy, upon all the spiritual promises made to the seed of Israel as being made to all who, like Israel, know what it is to wrestle with God, and to prevail. I have, therefore, no doubt whatever in taking such a promise as this, and using it with reference to the whole company of God's elect—those peculiar people, whom God has created for himself, who shall show forth his praise.

Viewed in that light, we have before us a text of exceeding glory, one of those great Scriptures that make me fear and tremble for all the goodness which the Lord causes to pass before me. I have presumed to handle it; but I do not presume to say that I can take you into its innermost meaning. I shall pick up a nugget here and there, which I find upon the surface; but I am painfully conscious that the great gold-mines underneath are not, as yet, within my reach. Oh, that we had grace to dig deeper! Oh, that we had greater capacity for comprehending the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of the love of God to his people. I am forced to say to each one of you, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee." I can only present to my hearers such as I am able to grasp with my own mind. May the Lord bless it!

I shall say to you, first, *consider this text for instruction:* secondly, *consider it with evidence:* and thirdly, *consider the inferences which naturally flow from it.* Oh, that the Holy Spirit may take of these deep things of God and show them unto you!

I. First, CONSIDER OUR TEXT FOR INSTRUCTION. When you do so, the first thought is, *God blesses his people heartily.* "I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart." Notice, in passing, that word "assuredly;" for it confirms the word as full of truth and certainty. There must be no doubt here: *assuredly* banishes it utterly. When the Lord looks upon his chosen, and opens his liberal hand towards them, assuredly his heart goes with his hand. There are some works of God in which his heart does not go. He smites the guilty with his left hand; but he says, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he turn unto me and live." But when he is dealing with his right hand of lovingkindness, his heart goes out with his hand. O beloved, you that receive his grace may know assuredly that, besides the blessings which you receive, you also have God's whole heart therewith. He blesses you with his whole soul or life. He concentrates his nature upon you, that he may bless you to the full. He is slow to wrath, but he is swift to mercy, for he delighteth in it. When he deals out his grace to his people, then you see the loving God, for "God is love;" and you see the living God, for he blesses you with his whole soul. His Godhead is displayed in the deeds of his love. There is a way of doing things, and there is *another* way of doing things: a work can be done, and done according to rule, and no great fault can be found with it; but yet it may be done listlessly, and as a matter of routine.

Another worker takes pleasure in his work, and throws his heart and soul into it. The result will show the difference in points which one can hardly mention in words. A painting with a great painter's heart and soul in it is a rare treasure. When the worker puts himself forth to his utmost, that he may do the work in the noblest fashion, the product is most precious. Even so has God determined that in the wonders of his grace, through Jesus Christ, he will show himself more fully than in any other labour to which he has set his hand. None other work so clearly displays the heart of Jehovah.

But then, next, *he does this work of blessing his people thoughtfully*, for it is added, "and with my whole soul." Not only the affections of God, speaking after the manner of man, but the great mind and life of God, is thrown into the work of saving and blessing his people. His essence, his soul, is here at home. The design argument, when brought to bear upon nature, proves the existence of God. We see in nature clear marks of design, and a design argues a designer. Much more when that argument is brought to bear upon the works of grace do we see the Lord; for in the transactions of grace there is design in everything. There is no one act of grace but hath its design of perfecting the chosen, no one blessing of the covenant but hath its aim for their eternal blessedness. Salvation is full of those thoughts of God, which are as much higher than our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. What a wonderful thought of God was the purpose to save his people at all! When he brought his foreknowledge to bear upon the future condition of the chosen, he knew what they would be, and provided for it. He determined to meet all the difficulties that he knew would arise, especially when he saw them ruined in the fall. He determined to undo by the second Adam the mischief wrought by the first. He saw his chosen dead, and determined to give them eternal life in his Son; he saw them guilty and condemned to punishment, and he resolved to remove that condemnation by a sacrifice. Perhaps the grandest thought of all was that God should meet law by law, and death by death; and bring his people, guilty as they were, to bear the punishment in the person of their glorious Substitute, and yet cause them never to bear the punishment at all in their own proper persons; for they were set free through the one perfect sacrifice. If you would learn God's wisdom to the full, as far as a human mind can grasp it, you should study the marvellous system of redemption, that whole scheme which begins in election, and which will never cease

> "Till all the chosen race
> Shall meet around the throne;
> Shall bless the conduct of his grace,
> And make his glory known."

Can you catch the thought that all the affections of God go out to his chosen, and that all the thoughts of God concentrate themselves upon them? What though he upholds high heaven, and rules the universe; what though illimitable space is filled with the marvels of his power and skill; yet is his whole heart and soul with his beloved ones. As a man, however wide his business, thinks still continually of his

home, so doth God, however many are his thoughts, consider first and last those of whom he says that he has graven them upon the palms of his hands. With his whole heart and his whole soul he gives them undivided attention. Did not I tell you I could not dive into the depths of this sea? I have thought of God's heart as I dared; I have thought of God's soul as best I could; but how can I know what is meant by the whole heart and the whole soul of the Infinite? Yet all this goeth forth when the Lord blesseth his people, whom he hath redeemed unto himself. He saith it himself, and so we may dare repeat it: "With my whole heart and with my whole soul."

We notice, next, that if that be so, then *he employs all his resources to bless his elect*. When a man is doing a thing with his whole heart and with his whole soul, you know that there is nothing in that man but what will come out if necessary: there is nothing the man has but what he will use it to accomplish his purpose. He counts all things cheap so that he may achieve the design which has absorbed him. The Lord our God—I speak as a man, and with deep reverence—is absorbed in doing good to his people: there is nothing that he is, there is nothing that he has, but what he will bring it to bear upon the design upon which he has set his whole heart and his whole soul.

When the prodigal returned to his father's house, his father, in joy over him, did not keep back anything. Had he love in his heart? He kissed him. Had he language on his lips? He spake his love: "Bring forth the best robe," saith he—it was always kept locked up by itself; but the best robe is for him—"put it on him. Put a ring on his hand." Go to the jewel-chest and fetch out the rarest treasure. Put shoes on his feet: the most costly sandals you can find, bring them hither, and let him be shod right royally. The whole resources of the mansion-house were lavished on him. "Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry." They had not music every day, but the father will not let a single harp or timbrel be silent on that day. The tinkling feet of the maidens shall keep time to the music: nothing shall be wanting to show forth the father's love and joy, and make his son rejoice. Behold ye, what God hath done for his people! He has given them his all: all the wisdom of his providence shall be theirs while here, and all the glory of his heaven hereafter. God has his abode in heaven; behold, he makes it the abode of his chosen for ever. Angels are his courtiers—they shall be ministering spirits to his elect. The throne of his Son they shall sit upon with him. The victories of God shall furnish them with palms, and the delight of God shall find them harps. But stop, there is something more than all! It was little for God to give earth and heaven, but he must needs give his Son, the express image of his glory, his other self. Out of the bosom of his love must Jesus Christ be taken; for he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Great God, thou hast all things, and thou hast given all things to thy people! Thou hast not held back of thy power, or of thy majesty; for we see thy strength, thy sovereignty, thy whole self, in their salvation! Thou hast not kept back thy wisdom or immutability; for we see both of these in their attaining to eternal glory! Thou hast laid out thine

own boundless all-sufficiency, that thou mightest bring thy many sons to glory. Oh for a well-tuned harp! My soul doth magnify the Lord; but how can I fitly praise him?

The Lord subordinates all other works to that of his love. When a man is absorbed by a mighty purpose, he may be doing other things—it may be needful that he should; but you will see him bend all other matters towards his chief end. He will bring home the sheaves from all the fields he tills, and lay them up in the garner of his main purpose. Now see what God hath done. When he made the heavens and the earth, his infinite wisdom thought of his people; and when he came to order the nations in providence, "he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." At this hour no king ascends the throne, and no dynasty vacates it, without reference in God's mind to his ultimate object. Pestilence, famine, earthquake, wars, all have some relation to the Church of God. All that happens, all that is yet to happen, whether it be the falling of the star Wormwood, or the pouring out of the vials, or whatever else we dimly see in the mystery of prophecy, all shall move toward the grand purpose of almighty love. These events are the bow, but his love purposes are the arrows. Everything, from the first opening of the seals to the complete unfolding of the book, shall have to do with the calling, cleansing, training, preserving, and perfecting of those chosen ones whom he hath given unto his Son. In the end, the heavens and the earth that now are shall be rolled up, like a worn-out vesture, and pass away; but in that day the Lord will have respect unto his chosen, and for them shall be prepared a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; for the bride of Christ, who shall have made herself ready for the marriage supper, there shall be a fit dwelling. Everything, whether of creation or destruction, mercy or judgment, shall work, like the wheels of some vast machinery, to produce good to those who are the people of the living God.

I would add to these thoughts, feeble and superficial as they are, by noticing, next, that *the Lord gives to his people and for his people without stint.* He blesses them with his whole heart and with his whole soul. Some persons of a half-hearted nature, even if they entertain you kindly, yet betray their want of warmth. Others in every little act prove their intense heartiness. I recollect when I was able to journey through the country preaching, I for several years stayed occasionally with a fine old English farmer. He used to have a piece of beef upon the table, I do not know how many pounds it weighed, but it was enormous, and I said to him one day, "Why is it that whenever I come here you have such immense joints? Do you think that I can eat like a giant? If so, it is a great mistake. Look at that joint, there," I said, "if I were to take it home, it might last me a month." "Well," he said, "if I could get a bigger bit I would, for I am so glad to see you; and if you could eat it all, you should be heartily welcome. I want everybody that comes here to-day to feel that I will do my very best for you." He did not measure my necessities to the half-ounce, but he provided on a lavish scale. I quote this homely instance of giving heartily to show you how, on a divine scale, the Lord makes ready for his guests. When

he entertains his people, ah sirs! he does not give them a measured portion of hard, dry bread, but he sets forth "fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined." The festivals of God are on a scale of splendour commensurate with his measureless dominion. When he feeds his children, though once they would have been thankful to eat the crumbs from his table, he sets them among princes, and gives them to eat of the king's meat. He lays eternity under contribution to provide for the needs, nay, for the desires, for the joys of his people. We are not straitened in our God. He has not arrayed us in coarse garments, but he has covered us with the robe of righteousness; he has not merely washed us, but he hath bejewelled us as a bride adorneth herself with ornaments; he has not provided workmen's tenements for us to dwell in, but "in my Father's house are many mansions." The Lord has not merely put at our disposal the beasts of the earth, but his angels are our body-guard. In the temple of God's love no stone is commonplace; they are all great jewels. Read in the Revelation how every course is jasper, or sapphire, or chalcedony, or emerald. The walls of his temple of grace are of all manner of precious stones, from the foundation to the topstone. But even jewels are mere toys compared with the infinite wealth of the divine liberality towards his own chosen. There is no stint supposable when the infinite Jehovah gives with his whole heart. How narrow are my expressions when I would set forth his illimitable goodness!

Beloved, another point sets forth most plainly that the Lord blesses his people with his whole heart and with his whole soul, *for he perseveres in it.* When did he begin with us?

> "Before his hands had made
> The sun to rule the day,
> Or earth's foundations laid,
> Or fashion'd Adam's clay."

When will he end with us? Never; for our souls are bound up in the bundle of life with the soul of the Lord our God. Truly, if he had been mindful of our shortcomings he might have found abundant cause for casting us off; but he has not dealt with us after our sins. I appeal to your own consciences, you that are the people of God: might he not many a time have said, "I am weary of thee"? But the weariness has been on the other side: his love complains of you, "Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." The Lord has rejoiced to do us good, and has multiplied his mercies. Are you not surprised with the variety of his favours towards you? An old writer says that "God's flowers bloom double," for he sends two blessings where there seems but one; but I would say they are like the light: they are sevenfold, even as in every ray from the sun we have seven colours blended in harmony. What sevens and sevens of infinite love are contained in every beam of mercy that comes to the redeemed! As every sin is many sins, so every pardon is many pardons; as every need containeth many needs within it, so every supply is many supplies. God blesses us many times every time he blesses us; and the wonder of it is that he continues these heaped-up mercies. He

has not forgotten his covenant of day and night; and certainly his mercies have been new every morning, and fresh every evening. Great is his faithfulness. Sometimes we think that the Ruler of the Universe has surely set aside his covenant as to seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat; for this year it is cold in summer-time; but yet our mind is sure that his word will not be violated in this respect; and even so, our gracious Lord may for a while answer us roughly, and smite us sharply, till the blueness of the wound alarms us; but all this is no evidence of want of love. Did he not say, "As many as I tenderly love I rebuke and chasten"? His covenant stands secure: there is with God no variableness, nor shadow of a turning. He continues still to hold fast to the purpose of his grace towards his chosen, and he will do so even to the end. All glory be unto his name!

As the Lord perseveres in his work, so *he succeeds in it.* God is determined to make something of his people, and he will. He has made a great deal more of us now than we ever dreamed that he could have done. He has made saints out of sinners, servants out of rebels, children out of aliens. Some of you are now being used in his service who were once the tools of Satan. Remember what you were once. Do not forget the dunghills whereon you grew. Bethink you of the mire out of which the Lord of love uplifted you. What a change he has wrought! When you are very depressed you ought to recollect that change. The Lord has done for you already that which should make you thunder out his praise for ever. But the Lord is going on to do far more for you. He has taken off some of the coarsest surface, but he will polish you yet to an exceeding beauty. I verily believe, if we could see ourselves as we shall be, it would make us laugh for very joy. If we could look in some magic glass, in which a man could see himself in the glorified state, we should sit down and look at it with amazement, till we should cry, "Can that be me? Is it possible that I shall ever come to such glory and beauty?" O my brother, you are only in the egg as yet; you have chipped a little bit of it, and you have looked out; but the most that you have seen is your own shell. Know you not that you have wings? Yes, wings which you cannot stretch as yet, for they are bound down by the shell; but you shall spread them soon, and mount aloft into that clear blue where eagles are at home. You shall rise above all visible things, and reach the serene abodes of the blessed. There shall you,

> "From all this earthly grossness quit,
> With glory crowned for ever sit;
> And triumph over death and thee, O Time!"

I suppose that God's great purpose was to multiply the glory of his only begotten Son. For the second Adam there was not found a help-meet, and the Lord resolved to fashion for him a bride, a dear companion. The glorious Son rejoiced in the thought, and henceforth his delights were with the sons of men. To this end the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, and for the same purpose we are to be made like him. He is the image of the invisible God; but he is also the firstborn among many brethren who are all to bear the

same likeness. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." I think Milton was not far from the truth when he supposed that Satan made a great gap among the courtiers of heaven when he led astray the third part of the stars of heaven, and that God resolved to repair that wall of service with living stones more costly and more beautiful than those which were removed from their place. Certainly he is doing so. In heaven there sits a man nearest to the eternal God, and we are there with him, and made like unto him: sons and yet servants, servants and yet sons. Does not Jehovah bless us with his whole heart and with his whole soul? I am getting a little deeper now. Here are waters to swim in. What I say is true, but it is not the tenth part of the truth. Blessed is that promise, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter."

Closing up this first division, we note that *God delights in all that he does for his own.* We are happy when God blesses us, but not so happy as God is. We are glad when we are pardoned, but he that pardons us is gladder still. The prodigal, going back to his home, was very, very happy; but not so delighted as his father, who could say, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The father's heart was the fullest of delight, and it was by far the larger heart, so that it could hold more joy. The Lord rejoices over his people, resting in his love, and joying over them with singing. Beloved, you think it impossible that God should delight in you, for you do not delight in yourselves. Yet it is true that he "taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." A little babe, if it had wit, and could look at itself, would say, "How inferior I am to my father! What feeble hands! What tottering feet! I am a poor, puny, dependent creature." Yes, but that is not the way in which the mother thinks of it. She spies out a loveliness in the weakness, and a beauty in the littleness of her babe. She looks at it until her eyes swim with tears lest anything should harm it. She thinks it the most beautiful thing that ever was, and doubtless it is so to her. Our God has all the instincts of motherhood and fatherhood blended in one; and when he looks upon his church he calls her "Hephzibah"—"My delight is in her." I read not that he delights in the works of nature alone, but he rejoices in the *habitable* parts of the earth. He does not rejoice in the works of his hands so much as in the works of his heart. The whole Godhead is at home in blessing those whom everlasting love has ordained to everlasting life.

Brethren, I will say no more; I leave this choice subject with you. Unlock this casket, and examine the pearls, although you will not be able to estimate their full value: "I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul."

II. Secondly, and, I am sorry to say, briefly, CONSIDER THE TEXT WITH THE EVIDENCE. I have already given you large evidence, and therefore I may have to go over the same ground again. In order to prove that God doth thus bless us with his whole heart and with his whole soul, I would remind you that the whole Trinity is engaged in

the blessing of the chosen. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one in essence, and one in this loving object.

First comes *the Father*. It was he that chose us—chose us, not because he must choose us or none, but freely with "his whole heart." He chose us when kings and great ones were passed by. With a deliberate, unchangeable, eternal choice, he made us his own. Having chosen us he planned for us. Oh, the plans of infinite grace in the council chamber of eternity—far-reaching, all-comprehending plans of unfailing love! Wisdom from her throne determined the way in which God would lead his people, and bless his people, and sanctify his people, and perfect his people. The great Father then entered into a divine covenant with his whole heart and his whole soul, pledging his royal word, and then adding his oath, that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. That covenant, ordered in all things and sure, is proof of the whole-heartedness of God. Remember, also, the gift of his dear Son. Here are two wonders: the gift of Christ for the chosen, and the gift of the chosen to Christ. The more you think of these two mysteries, the more will your mind be overflowed with gratitude. "O world of wonders! I can say no less."

When all this was done for us before we were born, was it not a striking thing that the Father should resolve to give us of his own life. Seeing we were spiritually dead, "he hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." This is marvellous! We that are his chosen are also his children, partakers of the divine nature. Nay, I cannot speak of that. That is to be thought of in your inmost souls: and, I had almost said, dreamed of in your sleep. Next, the Lord adopted us, for he does nothing by halves. Regeneration gives us the nature of children, but adoption gives us the status and rights of children. "If children, then heirs, heirs of"—what? Heirs of the world? No. Heirs of the world to come? Yes, if you please; but the Scripture speaketh more largely—"Heirs of God." God himself has become the heritage of his own people, and they are "joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." Surely I have proved that the Father has blessed us with his whole heart and with his whole soul.

In reference to the ever-blessed *Son of God*, whom we worship as most truly God, we have the same truth to state. He loved us ages before he came to earth as man. Long before he came to earth to bleed and die, he visited his people in different forms, and was seen by Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and others. In all this he proved how his whole heart and his whole soul went out to men. But, lo! the fulness of time is come. What see I yonder? A babe in a manger! An infant at a woman's breast! Thus the Son of the Highest condescends for our sakes. I see him, further on, a humble man, despised as a Nazarene. With weary feet he traverses Galilee and Judæa and Samaria, bearing our sicknesses, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. It is he; it is the Son of God! Start not as I lead you unto the garden of agony, where his groans amaze the angels, and the bloody sweat dyes all his garments as if he had trodden the winepress. It is he whom all the heavens adore. Is he not serving us with his whole heart and with his whole soul? Lo! I

see him bowing his head down to kiss our fallen humanity, and stretching out his hands on the cross to embrace the guilty, his feet meanwhile fast nailed as though he meant to await the latest comer. Yes, it is he: it is he who loved us with an everlasting love. Alas! his side was pierced, and blood and water flowed. Say, did he not bless us with his whole heart and with his whole soul? Was there ever one who lived so intensely as Christ did, or died with such whole-hearted self-sacrifice? Truly, the zeal of God's house had eaten him up; his whole heart and his whole soul went out in our redemption. After he was dead he rose again, and he was as intent to bless after his resurrection as when he fell asleep. He visited his disciples, and comforted them. Then he went up to heaven, and rejoined the Father's majesty, but he changed not his mind. Still with his whole heart and with his whole soul he lives for us. He is preparing heaven for us; he has taken possession of our celestial estates, and he is pleading for us before the throne. Do you not hear his intercession at this hour? Every day he continueth to promote the interests of his redeemed with his whole heart. Moreover, he is hurrying post-haste to come to us. "Behold," saith he, "I come quickly." Always, ever, with his whole heart and with his whole soul, this glorious Son of God is blessing his people. All honour be to his divine majesty!

I must not omit *the Holy Spirit*, "to whom be all honour and glory." The sacred Spirit of all grace blesses us with his whole heart and with his whole soul. He came after us when we went not after him. When we were mad with sin, and ravenous after the pleasures of it, he followed us, to check us in our headlong career, to beckon us to better things, to draw us thither, and to help us when we began to incline to the right. He gave us life, and light, and liberty. The most wonderful thing about the Holy Ghost is that he should ever deign to dwell in us. Is the Holy Ghost within this body? Does he dwell within the child of God? It is even so. For a prince to reside in a hovel is little condescension compared with the Spirit of God dwelling in these vile bodies of ours. Yet he is within us; and, being here, he works with all his heart. He quickens, but he leaves not that life untaught, for he instructs us. He teaches us to profit, "line upon line, precept upon precept"; but he is not content with teaching, he comforts us. When we are sad, he comes with divine consolations: this is very, very tender of him. He would not do this if he were not befriending us with his whole heart and with his whole soul. But he stops not at comforting; he goes on to render aid: "He helpeth our infirmities." Nor is this all: he strengthens us, and works in us to will and do of his own good pleasure.

My time is gone, and perhaps it is as well, for I have not the grace or wisdom to set out all this great matter. But if Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are found blessing us thus, we see in the sacred Unity in Trinity, not only unity of nature, but unity of purpose; and the One Jehovah is blessing us with his whole heart, and with his whole soul. How I prattle! My text is majesty, my talk is poverty. One cannot preach upon such a text as this. How shall I reach the height of this great argument? Here is manna for your souls! It tasteth as wafers

made with honey. Digest it well, and let it saturate the secret parts of your nature, and there let it sweeten spirit, soul and body.

III. So I close by saying to you—CONSIDER THE INFERENCES WHICH FLOW FROM THE TEXT. The first inference is one of *consolation*. Does God bless us with his whole heart and with his whole soul? Oh, then, how happy we ought to be! Come, my sister, wipe those tears away! Come, my brethren, you must get out of your despondency! You must not be down in the dumps while such a truth as this is before you. This unseasonable weather fills our bones with rheumatism, and our spirits with depression; but the eternal truth must influence more than the transient weather. While meditating on this theme, I said to myself, "Come, come, this will not do: with such a subject as this you ought to sing for joy." I felt that my preparation for the pulpit ought to be one continuous song. The Lord blesses me with his whole heart and with his whole soul, what better news can I hear? This sweet assurance is a bath of milk. Of the man who believes it we may say, "Butter and honey shall he eat." You breathe the perfume of heaven when you can get at the meaning of this text. Oh, the joy that lieth asleep in these words, as odours hide away in flowers! Come, heavenly wind, and wake the slumbering joys: constrain the celestial perfumes to flow abroad, that we may exult in them.

Our God does not give us his mercies off-hand, as we see a man fling a penny to a beggar. No, no, he blesses us with his whole heart, and with his whole soul. When the wicked are increased in riches, God's heart does not go with the gifts which enrich them: they are as bullocks fattened for the slaughter. The Lord does not think much of riches, and, therefore, he usually gives them to the ungodly as men give bones to dogs. But when he deals with his people, ah! then his heart goes with every penny that he gives them, with every crust that he puts on their table, with every drink of water that refreshes them, with every breath of air which sustains their lives. When your pulse beats, it keeps time to the goodness of God. In heights or in depths, in brightness or in darkness, God's endless, boundless, measureless love is always shining on you. Come, come, I say again, sorrow is out of place in this house this day. This is a feast day. Let us rejoice with heart and soul, seeing the Lord our God so largely blesses us.

Another inference, and I have done: it is one of *exhortation*. Let us love our God with our whole heart and with our whole soul. Let us begin with trusting him with our whole heart and with our whole soul. Lay the whole of your burden upon God: tell the whole of your sorrow to your Father. Trust him for the past, the present, and the future; trust him completely, implicitly, unhesitatingly. Then love him with all your heart and soul. We do not half love our God. I think I spy a spark or two of love down there in those ashes, and among those half-charred logs of wood. Come, let us wake up the flames till they blaze again. Blow carefully on the drowsy fires. Let us create a great fire and then heap on fresh logs. Oh, to love the Lord with something like his own love! Let us also serve him with our whole heart and our whole soul. How often the service that is done for God is slovenly, heartless, dull! Let it not be so

again. Brothers, if we preach, let us preach with our whole heart and with our whole soul. Sisters, if you teach your classes, teach them with your whole heart and with your whole soul. If all you can do is to give away a tract, give it away with your whole heart and with your whole soul. He that gives his whole heart and soul to you, great as they are, may well claim that you give your whole heart and your whole soul to him, little as they are. May the blessed Spirit lead you to whole-hearted consecration, and this will be a truly practical sermon! They say, "Put the whip into the manger"; and that is what I have tried to do. I have fed you that you may go the faster. Away, then, you high-mettled steeds; be strong as oxen, and swift as eagles. Fed on such food as this, you are bound to do the work of God with energy and perseverance. Glorify God's name, seeing he has done all this for you.

Oh, that you would all feed on this meat! Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and being born of God he hath God's heart and soul engaged for him. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you may take to yourself all that I have said; but if you believe not, I fear that you will die in your sins. God save you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah xxxiii.

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THE RULE OF THE RACE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 5TH, 1888, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."—Hebrews xii. 1, 2.

THE apostle saith, "Let us run." He has in his mind's eye the Olympic games, where all the different tribes of Greece were gathered together in general assembly to display the prowess of the race. Among the athletic exercises were foot-races. The apostle makes this foot-race an illustration of the Christian life. We must run with patience along the appointed course if we would win the prize of our high calling.

He stands with us at the starting-point, and earnestly says to us, not "Run," but, "Let us run." The apostle himself is at our side as a runner. The presence of such a comrade is most inspiriting. It is good doing good things in good company. "Let us run," saith he, "with patience the race that is set before us." Who will back out of a race wherein so great a saint takes his place at our side? Ho, ye who aspire to be associated with the excellent of the earth, press forward side by side with an apostle! "Let us run," from Paul's lip, puts wings upon our heels.

Before we start, with a wave of the hand the apostle directs us to the spectators who throng the sides of the course. There were always such at those races: each city and state yielded its contingent, and the assembled throng watched with eager eye the efforts of those who strove for the mastery. Those who look down upon us from yonder heavens are described as "so great a cloud of witnesses." These compass us about. Thousands upon thousands, who have run this race before us, and have attained their crowns, behold us from their heavenly seats, and mark how we behave ourselves. This race is worth running, for the eyes of "the nations of them which are saved" are fixed upon us. This is no hole-and-corner business, this running for the great prize. Angels, and principalities, and powers, and hosts redeemed by blood, have mustered to behold the glorious spectacle of men agonizing for holiness, and putting forth their utmost strength

to copy the Lord Jesus. Ye that are men, now run for it! If there be any spiritual life and gracious strength in you, put it forth to-day; for patriarchs and prophets, saints, martyrs, and apostles look down from heaven upon you.

Our apostle, anxious that we should so run that we may obtain, points to certain burdens and impediments which he foresees will hinder us, and he says, "Let us lay aside every weight." Note how he includes himself, so that his warning may not sound like upbraiding. We cannot win if we are weighted: the pace will have to be very swift, and we cannot get to it, or keep it up, if we have weights to carry. Unloaded, we shall find the race taxing all our powers; but weighted, we shall be doomed to failure. Oh, to lay aside all carking care, fretfulness, ambition, anger, greed, and selfish desire! These were never worth the labour they have cost us; but now that we have become running men, we *must* have done with them. Down they must go, till the last ounce is on the ground. Like the Greek footman, we would strip; and instead of adding weight, we would diminish even our own bulk, that we may fly along the course. O ye that would win, heed the caution, and "lay aside every weight," whether it be great or small; and press towards the mark! Run for it, man! Thou hadst need do nothing else but run.

Still attentively considering us, the apostle notes that even when the weights are laid aside, there is a garment about us which will assuredly twist about our feet, and throw us down. Sin, as well as care, must be laid aside. It doth easily beset us, and therefore we must be the more careful to be rid of it. Our original sin, our natural tendencies, our constitutional infirmities—these must be laid aside as garments unsuitable for men who are running the heavenly race. We cannot win heaven and wear sin. Heaven is for the holy: "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." Darling sins must go first: these, as they are most loved, will have the most power to hinder. Every kind of sin must be watched against, struggled against, and mastered. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." We hope to see all our tendencies to sin killed and buried—buried so deep that not even a bone of a sin shall be left above ground. This will be heaven to us.

Do I not hear you say, "May God help us"? This must be a tough race which requires such stripping as this. If every weight of care must be laid aside, and every rag of sin, who is sufficient for these things? How can we poor limping mortals run in such a race as this? Even the starting is beyond us: how much more must perseverance in it outreach our strength! See, my brethren, how we are driven to free grace, how we are driven to the power of the Holy Spirit! The race which is set before us most clearly reveals our helplessness, and our hopelessness, apart from divine grace. The race of holiness and patience, while it demands our vigour, displays our weakness. We are compelled, even before we take a step in the running, to bow the knee, and cry unto the strong for strength. We dare not retreat from the contest; but how can we begin a struggle for which we are so unfitted? Who will help us? To whom shall we look? Does not all this very admirably introduce the verse which

is specially my text—"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith"?

But the apostle has not quite done with us, for he warns us to remember the rules of the course in these words, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." You are not to run anyhow, or anywhere: you must keep the appointed course, or you might as well stand still. The way of God's command, the way of obedience, the way of humble trustfulness, the spiritual way, the way of the life given from above—this, and no other way will do, for this is the race set before you! Do you shrink? Does the way seem too mysterious, too contrary to the flesh, too trying? All this adds to the force of the precept—"Looking unto Jesus." Because the way itself and the rules of the running are such as your nature will fight against, therefore look the more earnestly to the great Captain of your salvation.

In a race a great point is the way in which a man keeps his eyes. He cannot run straight who hath a squint eye to this or to that. Straightforward is the best running; but he who has his eye on this and on that will run crookedly, and waste his strength. Look to the end, and then run in a direct line. I have read of a competition between certain young ploughmen who were set to plough for a prize. The most of them made very crooked work of it. After they had ended, one of the judges said, "Young man, where did you look while you were ploughing?" "I kept my eyes well on the plough handles, sir, and saw what I had to hold." "Yes," the judge said, "and your plough went in and out, and the furrow is all crooks." He asked the next ploughman, "and where did you look?" "Well, sir," he answered, "I looked at my furrow, I kept my eye always on the furrow that I was making. I thought I should make it straight that way." "But you did not," answered the judge, "you were all over the place." To the next he said, "What did you look at?" "Well, sir," he said, "I looked between the two horses to a tree that stood in the hedge at the other end of the field, right in front of me." Now that man went straight because he had a fixed mark to guide him. This helps us to appreciate the wisdom of the text, "Looking unto Jesus." Run: run straight: you cannot run straight except you keep your eye on one who is always the same. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith," you will have a sure preservative from wandering. Spiritual ploughmen, take heed that ye look not back, but plough a straight furrow towards Jesus on the throne! Spiritual runners, make a covenant with your eyes that you will look only to him who is the great end of all your running! Looking unto Jesus means life, light, guidance, encouragement, joy: never cease to look on him who ever looks on you.

To help us, the apostle describes the mark to which we are to look in four ways. "Look unto *Jesus*," the Saviour, is the sum and substance of it all; but he is set forth before us in four lights: first, *the author of faith;* secondly, *the finisher of faith;* thirdly, *the pattern of faith;* and lastly, *the goal* or *the end of faith.* We must look to Jesus Christ in each of these four respects. Oh, for the Holy Spirit's help while I speak thereon!

I. First, then, we are to look to Jesus as THE AUTHOR OF FAITH. The apostle would have us view the Lord Jesus as the starter of the race. When a foot-race began, the men were drawn up in a line, and they had to wait for a signal. Those who were in the race had to look to the starter; for the runner who should get first by a false start would not win, because he did not run according to the rules of the race. No man is crowned unless he strives lawfully. The starter was in his place, and the men stood all waiting and looking. At last he dropped his glove, or a handkerchief, and away they went. Our word at starting in the Christian life is, "Look unto Jesus." We must fix our eye on "the beginner of our faith"; for if we do not begin by looking to him, however quickly we may hurry along, we shall run in vain, and labour in vain. To what purpose will your running be, if the umpire determines that you started improperly?

The beginning of faith is "looking unto Jesus." Let us consider this. We have to look to Jesus, first, by *trusting in that which he has wrought for us*. It is described in these words—"Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." Jesus has endured the suffering and shame which were due to us. O soul, thou canst never start on the road to heaven unless thou dost look to him who "endured the cross" on thy behalf! Thy sin will make thee to endure the wrath of God for ever, unless thou dost look to him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Thou must get a faith's view of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, or else thou hast not even begun the heavenward race. Dost thou look upon thine own righteousness with pleasure? This is an ill start for thee, thy back is on the prize. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Dost thou look to thy frames and feelings? Thou wilt make a bad start with these, for they will guide thee into a fog, in which thou wilt lose the track. Look thou to Jesus, the suffering Saviour. He by his bearing the cross has removed thy heaviest weights, and by his death has destroyed thine entangling sin. He can renew thy nature by his resurrection power, and save thee from the dominion of sin by his glorious reign. If thou lookest alone to him, thou startest well; but not else.

The Greek word for "looking" is a much fuller word than we can find in the English language. It has a preposition in it which turns the look away from everything else. You are to look from all beside to Jesus. Fix not thy gaze upon the cloud of witnesses; they will hinder thee if they take away thine eye from Jesus. Look not on the weights and the besetting sin—these thou hast laid aside; look away from them. Do not even look upon the race-course, or the competitors, but look to Jesus and so start in the race. What hast thou to trust to but his blood and righteousness? Beware that thou set up nothing as a rival confidence. Look off from everything thou hast ever relied upon in days gone by, and say to thy soul, "None but Jesus." Thou must have a single eye and a single hope. "Christ is all," and he must be all to thee, or thou art out of the race altogether.

The instructive original has in it the word "*eis*," which is translated "unto," but in addition has the force of "into." We shall do well if we look unto Jesus, but better still if we are found "looking *into*

Jesus." I want you, when you begin your divine life, to take care that you look to Jesus with so penetrating a gaze that your "unto" grows to an "into." Read not only the outside of the volume of his life, but loose the seals thereof and read his heart. Dive into the meaning of what he has done for you. Look at his enduring the cross, know what it means, and enter into the fellowship of his sufferings. Study well the sin-bearing, the curse-bearing, the forsaking, and the sorrow unto death. Think how the Lord Jesus came under shame for your sakes, and see how he rose above it all. Look to him till you are familiar with the different views of the one great Sacrifice. Under the law, a poor man brought his two young pigeons, and the birds were divided in the middle, and so offered. A richer man brought a lamb or a bullock; this was divided carefully, and all its anatomy laid bare: this was to be done with the leg, and that with the shoulder, and there was an ordinance concerning the fat and the inwards. Thus some believers know the details of the sacrifice, and we want you, dear friends, to be among this better-instructed class. May you discern the Lord's body, and penetrate into the secrets of his soul, and so begin your Christian life with an intelligent and instructed faith. This will secure better running throughout the rest of the road. Still you must look to Jesus only, whether you know little or much. It is not your knowledge, but himself that must be your one ground of trust. You must take Jesus to be Alpha as well as Omega. To you his name stands at the head of the book, and it is also the Amen which closes it. To your experience the Scripture is true—"In the beginning was the Word." You begin to run when you look to Jesus.

But then, dear friends, we also begin looking unto Jesus, because of *what he has wrought in us*. I would remind you who are a good way on in the course of those first eager paces with which you started heavenward. Did you not begin with looking unto Jesus? As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so continue in him. The Lord Jesus first called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. He sweetly inclined us to think upon himself as the way, and made us wishful to become heavenly footmen. It was he that quickened us, even as of old he raised the dead. The Father quickeneth whomsoever he will, and even so does Jesus. Even now I seem to hear his voice crying, "Lazarus, come forth!" Well do we recollect when serious thought, anxious desire, deep repentance, lingering hope, and trembling faith entered our souls through "looking unto Jesus." Did he not give us pardon at our setting out? It was by looking to him that the great load of sin fell from off our conscience. With pardon of sin came a great loathing of sin: washed in the precious blood we could not wantonly repeat the stains. Our earliest repentance and its fruits came from "looking unto Jesus." Our heart of stone had been hardened by looking elsewhere, but the vision of the sacred head encrowned with thorns did the softening work. We looked and were enlightened, enlivened, enraged against sin, and enamoured of Jesus.

Our first acceptance with God came from looking to Jesus by faith. We found ourselves accepted in the Beloved. O my friend, do you remember that rapturous moment when you perceived that the robe of righteousness had covered you from head to foot, and that your

filthy raiment had been taken away? You cannot forget that time of love. At that moment you felt the love of God within your spirit like a consuming fire, burning up your sin. You also were filled with love to the Lord your God. You wondered how it came there till you perceived that you loved him because he first loved you. Then was every evil abhorred of your soul; then were you ready for any holy service; then self-denial became a pleasure to you; then you forsook the company of the wicked, and sought the society of the saints. The love of Jesus had started you upon a race which otherwise you would not have chosen: you were converted, turned, turned quite round. You owned that henceforth you were not your own, and could not run towards self: you were bought with a price, and therefore must run towards your Redeemer. A sight of the Crucified did it all.

Thus, dear friends, Jesus is the beginner of our race of faith by what he has wrought for us, and by what he has wrought in us.

Have I any here this morning who are about to start for heaven? Mind that you start aright. I pray you, do not fall into any delusion. Do not imagine that your life will avail you anything, however good and moral it may have been, unless you begin by looking unto Jesus. Mr. Bunyan, in his "Pilgrim's Progress," frequently speaks of those who tumbled over the wall, or came in by other irregular ways; but they all missed the end. As they came in without Christ, so they went out without hope. One who came near to the celestial city, who had not come in at the gate, was made to know that there is a back-way to hell, even from the gate of heaven. You must begin with looking unto Jesus, or you will end with a fearful looking for of judgment. Doth not Jesus say, "I am the beginning"? Would you set up another beginning? He must be the first letter of your hope, or else you do not even know the alphabet of salvation.

II. But now, secondly, we must look to Jesus as THE FINISHER OF FAITH. As Jesus is at the commencement of the course, starting the runners, so he is at the end of the course, the rewarder of those who endure to the end. Those who would win in the great race must keep their eyes upon him all along the course, even till they reach the winning-post.

You will be helped to look to him when you remember that he is the finisher of your faith *by what he has wrought for you;* for the text saith, "He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." You also shall have heaven, for he has it; you shall sit upon the throne, for he sits there. Look to his passion on the cross, to begin with; look to his session on the throne, that you may hold on to the end. Look to Jesus as dying for the pardon of your sin, but as living for the justification of your souls. Incarnation and death have led on to intercession and endless life.

Jesus has sat down: he takes his rest because he has completed his work. Here on earth he was filled with shame, but yonder in glory he is full of honour, for he is set down "at the right hand of God." Here he was bound and led captive; there he is King of kings and Lord of lords, for he sits at the right hand of the throne of God. Here on earth we see his manhood, born in a manger, living in poverty, dying the ignominious death of the cross; there we adore his divine

glory, for he is "at the right hand of the throne of God." Think of your Saviour as your God, clothed with all power and authority. Surely this should urge you to quicken your pace, and never to become weary or faint. You began by looking to him as a sufferer, persevere by looking to him as a victor. "Be of good cheer," said he, "I have overcome the world." In that fact he gives you an assurance of your own victory. The seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head, and therefore the Lord will tread Satan under your feet shortly. The death of Christ is our death for sin; but the life of Christ is our life unto holiness. The shame of Christ was our shame, and the triumph of Christ is our triumph. Wherefore, looking unto Jesus let us run.

We are helped to run to the end, not only by what Jesus has done for us, but *by what Jesus is doing in us.* Beloved, you that are in the middle of the race, remember that Jesus *sustains* you. Every atom of your strength for running comes from your Lord. Look to him for it. Do not take a step in creature strength; nor seek after any virtue, or growth, or progress apart from his life and grace. He saith, "From me is thy fruit found." He works all our works in us, and because he worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, therefore we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

We are not only sustained by looking unto Jesus, but we are *inspirited* thereby. If we win a glance from his eye, our feeble knees are confirmed. We take breath as we behold him on the throne, and dash forward again. Those dear eyes of his are to us as stars are to the mariner. Jesus says to us, "Come on, I am victorious, and so shall you be." A sight of the exalted Leader fires the zeal of each believer, and makes him run like a roe, or a young hart.

Looking unto Jesus, you will get many a *direction;* for, as he sits at the winning-post, his very presence indicates the way. If our eyes are up to him, as the eyes of a servant to her mistress, we shall run well. "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle"; but say with David, "Thou shalt guide me with thine eye." A look from the eye of Jesus is enough for a saint; and if you, my hearer, are indeed "looking unto Jesus," you will avoid crooks and turns, and will take the shortest road to holiness and eternal glory. Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and you will not grow weary, neither will you miss your way.

Look to Jesus, for by that look he *draws* you. The great magnet up yonder is drawing us towards itself. Christ's cords of love give us speed. The more in the power of the Holy Spirit you meditate upon our Lord's passion on the cross and his session on the throne, the more will you be drawn towards him, and the faster will you move. "Draw me, we will run after thee" is the cry of the Old Testament Church, and it is ours also. Lord, we would look that thou mayest draw.

While we are running we look to our Lord as the finisher of faith, and we see him leaning forward and *holding out the crown.*

> "'Tis his all animating voice
> That calls us from on high;
> 'Tis his own hand presents the prize
> To our aspiring eye."

The sight of the crown removes all weight from our crosses. The race ceases to be severe when we see Jesus enthroned. I see him to-day at the end of the course holding out the wreath to me, and saying, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Oh that you may each one see him, and feel that "the crown of glory that fadeth not away" is worthy of a life's running. Thus will Jesus, by holding out the reward, become the finisher of faith.

When the race is over, Jesus will appear as the finisher of faith by coming forward to *crown you* with his own right hand. Yes, his hand shall award the prize, and his lips shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Jesus himself will admit the faithful to the place which he has gone to prepare for them. Wherefore be of good courage and run! Jesus at the end of the race will enthrone us with himself: "Let us run."

I invite you, taking the sense of the word "looking" which I have already hinted at, to turn over in your mind these things. *Look away from* all self-denials, difficulties, labours, sufferings, temptations, and persecutions; and equally look away from all pleasures, profits, and preferments, and look to Jesus, who has won the race himself, and now helps you in the race, and holds out the crown at the end of it. Look till you begin to *look into him* and see somewhat of his inward glory, and of its outflowings to his redeemed. Say to yourself, "All things are in him for me. All spiritual blessings God doth bestow upon me according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Doth the Father bless me in my enthroned Lord? Then my feet shall not weary in the heavenward way. Does Jesus lean forward as if he would crown me even now? Then I will quicken my pace to come to him. Does the Holy Spirit help my infirmities? Then will I run swiftly in his strength.

Thus I have tried in my own feeble way to set before you Jesus as the Author and the Finisher of faith: look to him and run.

III. Let us next consider our Lord Jesus as THE PATTERN OF OUR FAITH. Run, as Jesus ran, and look to him as you run, that you may run like him. How did our Lord pursue his course?

You will see this if you first note *his motive:* "Who for the joy that was set before him." Jesus had a motive in all that he did. Men do not do much if they act from mere feeling, and have no underlying design. Indeed, a life without an object must be a frivolous, useless life. Jesus had before him the great joy of glorifying the Father in the salvation of his chosen. For this he lived, for this he died: it was a joy to him to think of accomplishing this object. Beloved, if you want to run your race aright, it must be for the glory of God, and in the hope of the salvation of your fellow-men. These two things, blended into one, must be your joy. Oh that this motive took possession of our entire being! The chief end of man is to glorify God: let it be my chief end, even as it was my Lord's. Oh that I might glorify thee, my Creator, my Preserver, my Redeemer! To this end was I born, and for this end would I live in every action of my life. Brethren, we cannot run the race set before us unless we feel thus. We must, like the Saviour, seek the glory of God by saving our fellow-men. Live for this. Live to seek out the wandering

sons of men, and thus to be a shepherd under the Great Shepherd. Learn from him to carry the lambs in your bosom. There is no running heavenward unless the service of God is a joy to us. We run in an approved fashion when we spend and are spent in glorifying God. May you throughout eternity have to rejoice that you were not fruitless! Oh, may none of you be written down as "creation's blot, creation's blank"; but may you all have the joy of glorifying God on earth, and finishing the work he has given you to do!

Wherein are we to imitate Jesus? First, we are to copy *his endurance*. He "endured the cross." Ours is a trifling cross compared with that which pressed him down; but he endured it. He took it up willingly, and carried it patiently. He never rebelled against it, and never relinquished it. He bore the cross till the cross bore him, and then he bore death upon it. He could say, "It is finished." Brethren, let us do the same. Are you persecuted, are you poor, are you sick?—take up the appointed cross. Christ ran with a cross on his shoulder, and so must we run. Do not try to escape trouble: the followers of the Crucified must be familiar with the cross. Endure it patiently, joyfully, in the strength of God. "Looking unto Jesus," behold *his* cross whenever you begin to faint under your own. Think of the bloody sweat, the scourging, the wounds, the blasphemies of men, the forsaking by God! Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow, or endurance like to his endurance. Shoulder your cross, and run towards the Crucified.

Imitate your Lord in *his magnanimity*. He endured the cross, "despising the shame." Shame is a cruel thing to many hearts. Our Lord shows us how to treat it. See, he puts his shoulder under the cross, but he sets his foot upon the shame. He endures the one, but he despises the other. What! Shall his disciples make much of that which he despised? Are you such gentlemen, that none may come between the wind and your nobility? I wonder when I hear some people say, "I cannot stand being laughed at." Does laughter break bones? "But ridicule is very sharp!" Is it? Do the wounds bleed? "Well," cries one, "a keen sarcasm from a wit stings you!" Does it? Have you no cure for such bites? Some of us have in our minds been like Marcus Arethusa, who was stung to death by wasps; and yet we are none the worse, but rather are we all the better, for there remains no place whereon a new sting can operate. Oh, that some of you, who are so tender, could have thicker skins in this respect! I heard of a prayer the other day which I did not quite like at first, but there is something in it after all. The good man said, "Lord, if our hearts are hard, make them soft; but if our hearts are too soft, make them hard." I know what he meant, and I think I can pray that last prayer for some of my friends who are so delicate that a sneer would kill them. May the Lord harden them till they can despise the shame! Answer shame by making it see that you are ashamed of the scorner. Laugh at the laughter of fools, despise their despising. With glorious greatness of spirit Jesus remained unprovoked amid the cruel taunts of godless men. Run through the ribald throng. Shut your ears and run, despising the shame.

Our Saviour is to be imitated in *his perseverance*. For the joy that

was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and "is set down." He never stopped running till he could sit down at the right hand of the throne of God; and that is the only place where you may sit down. My brother, Satan puts before you a comfortable arm-chair, and he says, "Take thine ease." No, no; run till you can sit down at the right hand of the throne of God. There are many dainty little arbours all along the Hill Difficulty, with settles and tables; and men, if they get into them, are very apt to fall asleep, and lose their roll of comfortable assurance: therefore, pass these arbours by. Runners must not sit down: that were to throw the race away. The only running that will save is persevering running. From starting-point to winning-post there must be no pausing. We must practise daily obedience, daily holiness, daily service. An off-and-on religion is a false religion. We must keep to the running till God gives us rest. Our Lord has won the victory. His enthronement "at the right hand of God" has well rewarded the man Christ Jesus for the depth of his shame and misery. We must not cease our following of him till we triumph too. When we have finished our course, then we shall receive our crowns; but as yet we must copy the Captain of salvation by running steadily on.

Our Lord's body bore five wounds, and these shall help your memory to think of the five virtues in which you are to imitate your Lord. The piercing of the right hand is the memorial of his *faith*. He believed in God in the depth of his agony, and trusted that he would deliver him. Oh, for more faith! The left hand wound is his *patience*. He "endured, as seeing him who is invisible," he reviled not again; he said "Thy will be done." The foot-wound reminds me of his *humility*, and how he was obedient to death, even the death of the cross; and that other foot-wound suggests to me his *perseverance*. His feet were nailed to the wood: his soul was joined to his work. Best of all, in yon great wound in his side I see his love. The spear opened a passage to his heart. Love as Jesus loved, loving God and loving men; then shall you triumph as he triumphed, and he will crown you as he himself is crowned. God help you so to run.

IV. Lastly, our text sets before us Jesus as THE GOAL OF FAITH. We are to run "looking unto Jesus" as the end that we should aim at. We go towards our Lord every step that we take. True faith neither goes away from Christ Jesus, nor takes a roundabout road to Jesus, nor so much as dreams of going beyond Jesus. We have wise men about us nowadays who are going a long way beyond the gospel. The old faith which inspired apostles, enabled the glorious army of martyrs to lay down their lives, and produced the noblest of human characters in past ages, is not good enough for the superfine sophists of these days. This boastful nineteenth century demands a new God, a new Christ, a new heaven, a new hell, a new gospel, and everything else new except a new heart. But we, brethren, are not going to run in that direction. We run towards Christ, and that is the good old way, "the way the holy prophets went." We never expect to get beyond the teaching of our Lord Jesus either in this life or in the life to come. The end of our conversation is, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to day, and for ever."

Now, we are to run towards him, looking unto him. Looking to Jesus and running to Jesus will look well and run well together. The eyes outstrip the feet, but this also is well; for the feet will thus be made to move the faster. Look you that you may *see more of Jesus*. I have already told you what differences there are in men's perceptions of Christ: now I want you to keep on looking and running, that you may be among the best instructed, seeing most of him and in him. Those who have seen most of Jesus have only taken a cupful out of the great ocean of his fulness. We who live in this land of murk and cloud may imagine that we have seen the sun, for now and then he peeps out through a veil of mist; but ask an Italian who lives beneath the clear blue sky, where the sun is at home, and walks the heavens without a veil, and he will tell you that an Englishman does not see the sun. For myself, the sun seems in those regions to brighten my nature, and lighten my mind: the lord of day talks to my heart and makes it dance for joy. Many a believer lives in a foggy atmosphere of doubts and fears; he sees his Lord now and then, but it is not half a sight. Oh that we could all dwell under the unclouded skies of full assurance, and see Jesus more nearly! I urge you in your running to come nearer and nearer to Jesus, that you may see him more and more clearly.

Let us run towards Jesus that we may *grow more like him*. It is one of the virtues of Jesus that he transforms into his own image those who look at him. He photographs himself upon all sensitive hearts. There are no looking-glasses that I know of which improve the looker's eye; but this mirror of God, as you look into it, enlightens your eyes and beautifies your character. As you see Christ you become Christians. O beloved, our lives would not be so faulty, so wrinkled, so uncomely, if our eye were more completely taken up with beholding the transcendent charms of the altogether Lovely One! It would make us glorious if we saw more of the glory of Jesus.

Run that you may *come nearer* to Jesus. Seek after more near and dear fellowship with him. He is not far away from us. He is absent as to his corporeal frame, but he is with us in spirit. He comes very close to us at times, when he finds us fit for the joy. We remember him from the Hermons and the hill Mizar. We can never forget the golden moments and the hallowed places wherein he has manifested himself unto us as he doth not unto the world. There are hours when our head is on the bosom of Christ. There are times when we sit at his feet and hear his words, and looking up behold his beauty, and are ravished therewith. Run towards him till you are nearer to him in communion than up till now you have been. This is worth running for; but you will not have it without running. Remember how the spouse in the Song could not find her Lord till she had gone through the streets of the city mourning till she embraced him.

Keep on looking and running till you are with him. Oh, I talk to you now about being with him, but how soon this may be realized in the most literal sense! During my ministry in this place it has occurred two or three times, that when the service has ended, dear friends have essayed to go to their homes, but they have died in this House of Prayer. What must it be to go from this

congregation to the assembly above? What a change from the poor talk of the preacher to the voice of the Well-Beloved! We do not know how near to Jesus on the throne we may now be. The sea fog is around our vessel. Could we see before us, the white cliffs of our native shore are almost within touch. Think not that we are far out at sea. Within the next week, perhaps, some of us will see the King in his beauty. We may spend next Sunday in heaven! Does anybody shrink from such a prospect? No: each heir of heaven says "Amen; so let it be." Then the sweat of the race will be wiped away, and the sweet of the triumph will begin. Then the fatigue and distress will have ended, and the rest and the glory will have commenced. I would cheer you with the thought that you are much nearer the winning-post than you think. How soon you may sit among the blood-washed throng! You older brethren and sisters in the course of nature must be there soon: be glad of it. Do not talk about being on the wrong side of seventy: you are on the right side, for you are so much nearer heaven. Formerly when great ships went to the Indies, the passengers would for a while toast the friends they left behind. But when they were in the Indian Ocean, they began to drink the health of friends ahead. Though comparatively young, I have many, many friends who are in the land beyond, to which I am making my way. I salute the glorified. Some of the dearest and best people that ever lived were members of this church, but they are now safely landed on the celestial shore. They are waiting and watching for us. We are coming, brethren! We will be with you soon. Best of all, our Lord is there. Once crowned with thorns, his head is now radiant with the diadem of universal dominion. He will come to welcome us on that blessed shore. Hasten, O time! Be like a seraph with six wings and bear us swiftly to that golden strand where we shall see the face of him we love, and shall be

"Far from this world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."

Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews xii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—912, 694, 877.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LORD'S SUPPER: A REMEMBRANCE OF JESUS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 19TH, 1888,

DELIVERED AT MIDSUMMER BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"This do in remembrance of me."—Luke xxii. 19.

"THIS do"—that is, take bread, give thanks, break it, and eat it—take the cup, filled with the fruit of the vine, give thanks, and drink ye all of it. "*This do.*" *Take care that you do just what Jesus did;* no more, and no less. This act was done at a table where they had been eating the Passover. This act was performed at a common meal, and was not a sacrifice, nor a celebration, nor a function, nor anything more than a significant eating of bread and drinking of wine after a devout fashion. This do, then. As often as ye break the bread, and as often as ye drink of the cup, remember the Lord Jesus. It is this that we are to do, and not something else which may be supposed to grow out of it. He does not say, "Do something else in remembrance of me—something which you may choose to do, retaining this act as the backbone of it; but *this* do." *This* which has just been done: this in all its simplicity, solemnity, and intent.

Alas, how sadly have men forgotten this! The plain supper has not been a grand enough display. To break bread, and to drink wine, have not seemed to them to be sufficiently solemn, or sufficiently gorgeous, and so they have added all kinds of rites and institutions. That which was only a table, they have made into an altar, and that which was a supper and nothing more, they have changed into a celebration. They do not *this*, but they do something else which they have devised and elaborated. Imagine Paul or Peter attending mass, and observing the various genuflexions—the movings to and fro, the liftings up, and the stoopings down, and all the various operations of the Roman priesthood too many to describe! Paul would pluck Peter by the sleeve, and say, "Our Master did nothing like this when he took bread and gave thanks and brake it." Peter would reply, "Very different this from the guest-chamber at Jerusalem!" And Paul would add, "Ay, indeed, my brother, very different this from the time when the first believers met together, and brake bread, and drank of the cup in common, in remembrance of their Lord."

Whatever other communities may do, be it ours, my brethren, to stand fast by "*This* do in remembrance of me." "*This*," simply "this," and nothing more, and nothing less; bread, not a wafer; fruit of the vine, not the concoction of chemistry inflamed with fiery spirit. We use this fruit of the vine in a cup, and that cup not reserved, but partaken of by all. We have before us bread, and that not worshipped, as at the elevation of the host; but broken and eaten. The Lord and his disciples sat at a table and ate: it was a feast, and not a sacrifice; they reclined, and did not kneel. So would we do, because he has said, "*This* do," and not something else.

Then, beloved friends, we shall have to be very watchful upon another point, namely, that if we do this, *we do it for the purpose for which he gave it*, namely, in remembrance of him. Jesus never said, "This do, that ye may offer an unbloody sacrifice." Where in Holy Scripture is there a syllable like it, either from our Lord's own lips, or from those of the apostles? He never said, "Do this as the perpetual repetition of my death." To my mind the very thought is blasphemy, for our Lord claims to have finished his work, and having died unto sin once, death hath no more dominion over him. The Jewish sacrifices, by reason of their insufficiency, were often repeated, but "this Man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." They blaspheme the sacrifice of Christ who imagine that any man, call him priest or not, can continue, repeat, or complete that sacrifice for sin. It is finished, and our Lord has gone into his glory. Sin is put away by his bearing it in his own body on the tree. This do ye in remembrance of Christ, but not as continuing his sacrifice, which is for ever perfect.

I would not, for my part, on any account adopt the posture of kneeling in receiving the Lord's Supper, because if it does not actually imply worship of the bread and wine, it has a tendency to lead us away from remembrance of the person himself into an adoration of the memorials. The sacred supper was a feast, not a ceremony. The posture used at the feast was that of lying along—the easiest posture into which they could put themselves. That is not congruous with our western custom; but the analogous position is that of sitting as much at ease as possible, which posture I would encourage you to persist in. Let us keep the feast as a feast, but by no means kneel as though we were performing an act of worship before an altar. Adoration of the invisible God is always right and proper; but if a certain posture seems to take away from the very essence of the festival—and a festival it is; and if in addition it encourages superstition, then kneel not, but sit, and *do this* in remembrance of Christ. Do this, and nothing else, and do it in remembrance, and for no other purpose; and if any other posture looks another way, abjure it, and keep close to that for which you have a precedent. The church of Rome prizes the great picture by Leonardo da Vinci, and in it all the apostles are seated at the board. Is this at all like the mass? The supper is to be eaten in remembrance, and for nothing more; but that, as we shall have to show you, is no little thing. "This do in remembrance of me."

Seeing that this is a feast of remembrance, let us ask ourselves a question—*Do we know the Lord?* "This do in remembrance of

me." If you know nothing of a person; if you have had no acquaintance with him, you cannot remember him. Like a two-edged sword, this simple statement of truth sweeps through this audience to-night, and divides it in twain. Whether or not I may come to the Lord's table must depend upon whether I know the Lord Jesus, or do not know him. If I am a stranger to him, I may not come, for I may only come to remember him, and I cannot come to remember him if I do not know him; so that it were a profanation of this blessed institution for any man to draw near to the table who does not know Christ already. O sirs, this is no saving ordinance: it was never meant to be; its intent relates only to those who are saved. To know Jesus Christ is eternal life; and as you may not come without that knowledge, it is clear that you may not come unless you are saved. If any of you dream that your participation in your last moments in what is called "the sacrament" will save you, you are under a deep delusion. You may as well trust to the incantations of a witch as to the performance of any ceremony whatever, by whomsoever, in order to convey salvation to you. Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ; and that is not wrought by the corporeal act of swallowing bread and wine. Ye must be born again; and that is not effected by material substances, however consecrated; it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Until you have believed in Jesus, and so know him, and know his power within you, and have come to personal dealings with him, instead of getting a blessing from the ordinance, you would eat and drink condemnation to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body. You are not capable of discerning that body if you have no faith. Let every man examine himself as to his knowledge of our Lord, and so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup. If you do not know him you cannot remember him, and therefore, hands off from the tokens of remembrance.

One word—one solemn word here, which I would speak with my whole soul. Remember, if you do not know him, the day will come in which he will say to you, "I never knew you." If there is no personal intimacy between you and Christ, he will disown you in the day when he cometh in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him. It will be idle to say, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." If you do not know him, he does not know you, and there will be simply this reply to all your claim derived from external religion—"Depart from me, ye cursed, I never knew you." But, dearly beloved, if you do know the Lord—and I trust that many here do indeed know him—then it is certain that he has manifested himself to you. Wondrous love! Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us? You have looked to him; you have trusted in him; you have lived upon him; and all this because he has remembered you in your low estate. You remember him with joy at this moment because of your past experience of him. He is so dear to you that you must remember him. You could not live without him. He is all your salvation and all your desire. Well, then, it is for you to come to this festival, and do this in remembrance of him.

I. My first point shall be, that THE MAIN OBJECT OF THE LORD'S

SUPPER IS EVIDENTLY THAT WE SHOULD REMEMBER CHRIST BY IT. Notice this particularly. It is not that you should call to mind a doctrine, though I would not have you ignorant or unmindful of any truth which the Spirit of God has revealed; neither is it that you should be mindful of a precept, though, beloved, I would have you careful that in all things you do your Saviour's will. But the pith and essence of your business at his table is, "This do in remembrance *of me*," that is, of himself—of his own blessed person. Think not of him as an abstraction! Dream not of him as a mere idea! Do not merely contemplate him as an historical personage who was once before men, and has now passed from off the canvas of history, as Confucius, Zoroaster, or the like. No; he ever liveth, and abideth an actual, ever-energetic force and power among men of every age. Jesus is of that divine nature which dwells perpetually in the present tense—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Beloved, as you live by him, you must learn to live in him, and with him, so as to know him as a friend with whom you are really familiar. The Christ of our dreams is but a dream; we need a real, living, personal Christ, and it is Jesus Christ himself that we have to remember to-night at this table.

And if we do this, we shall remember him, first, *with gratitude as our Saviour*. If I have aught of hope, I owe it all to thee, incarnate God, Son of the Highest, and Son of Mary, too. Thy love, thy life, thy death, thy resurrection, thy power at the right hand of God—these must be the pillars of my hope, if hope I have at all.

> "All our immortal hopes are laid
> In thee, our Surety and our Head;
> Thy cross, thy cradle, and thy throne,
> Are big with glories yet unknown."

He has saved us, brethren, and loved us, and blest us with everlasting consolation within himself. Oh, let us think of him! The streams of which you drink are sweet; but think of the fountain-head. Your healing is a thing to sing of for ever. Remember that you are healed by his stripes, and think of those cruel scourges, those five wounds, that body covered with a bloody sweat, that dear, thorn-encircled brow, those eyes all dimmed with blood. Remember Jesus himself, I pray you, and think neither of pardon, nor of justification, nor of sanctification apart from him. The streams of love I trace up to the fountain in the heart of Christ, and remember him to-night with deepest gratitude. Follow me, my beloved, in this meditation; yea, go before me, and get more nearly to the heart of your Redeemer.

You must remember him, next, *with profound reverence as your living example*—your living and reigning Lord. Know ye not that as many of you as have been washed in his blood are henceforth God's servants, even as he was? You are not to do your own will, but his will who has redeemed you. His example is to you the embodiment of the Lord's will. Do we not sweetly sing—

> "My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
> I read my duty in thy Word;
> But in thy life the law appears
> Drawn out in living characters"?

It is yours, then, to remember the Lord Jesus that you may follow him. In sickness, recollect him in his patience. When you are persecuted, recollect him in his gentleness. In holy service, remember him with his burning zeal. In your times of solitude, remember him and his midnight prayers; and when you are in public, and have to bear witness, remember him and his lion-like declarations of the gospel. Remember him so that he becomes your pattern, and you are the reproduction of himself, and so the best memorial of him.

Thus enabled by the Holy Spirit to remember your Lord with gratitude as your Saviour, with reverence as your Lord, you will remember him *with confidence as your strength.* He has not left you in this world to serve him at your own charges, and to bear his cross alone. Remember him, for he remembers you so as to be ever with you. "Lo, I am with you alway," saith he, "even unto the end of the world." Will you let him be near you unnoticed and unremembered? Never say, "I am lonely." You are not alone if you remember Jesus. O widow and fatherless one, say not, "I am comfortless." He hath said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Remember him without ceasing. When you are strong, remember him; for your strength comes from him. When you are weak, remember him; for he can give you the help you need. Oh, that in all times and places Christ were all in all to us!

> "Remember thee! thy death, thy shame
> Our hearts' sad load to bear!
> O memory, leave no other name
> But his recorded there!"

I would have the image of my Lord printed on the palms of my hands, that I might *do* nothing without him; and I would have it painted on my eye-balls, that I might *see* nothing except through him. It were better still to have it stamped upon the heart, that my very life might not beat except to the music of his name.

Remember him, too, beloved, as *your great representative before the throne of God.* O believer, at this very moment heaven is yours! Jesus, your forerunner, has taken possession of eternal glory in your name. The throne of God has in the midst of it the glorified Man, the everlasting Son of God, who is the Covenant Head and Redeemer of his people. Never forget him, but keep your eye fixedly upon him, even as he keeps his eye upon you. He lives! The great Redeemer lives! He lives to plead for you. Do not get into the habit of the Romish church, which exhibits its dead Christ everywhere, or its baby Christ in the virgin's arms. Jesus is neither of these at this present. "He is not here: he is risen." He lives! It is the living Christ that we believe in, the ascended Christ we are trusting in, the Christ to come that we are hoping for. There, where he pleadeth with all authority, is our grand hope, for "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Remember him, once again, *as soon to come.* Perhaps while yet these lips are feebly fashioning halting words concerning wondrous mysteries, the trumpet may ring out above all earthly sounds. Even on

this Sabbath night we may be called to behold the cloud upon which the Son of Man has come! "Of that day and hour knoweth no man"; and vain is the folly which is perpetually prophesying of that concerning which it knoweth nothing. Yet this is certain: the Lord Jesus will come to judge and to reign. "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." He said long ago, "Behold, I come quickly." He has been coming in haste ever since, and he must be drawing very near. Now, this is what we are always to remember, for his coming will be the manifestation of his people as well as of himself. His coming will witness the reward of his saints as well as his own reward. Then shall he shine forth; and with him "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Alas, we too much forget him in all these aspects! I fear that we more easily forget than remember; and yet the remembrance of one so dear should be natural to us. Did you suspect, when you were first converted, that you could ever forget him? "Oh, no," you said—

> "Let the babe forget its mother,
> Let the bridegroom slight his bride;
> True to thee, I'll love no other,
> Clinging closely to thy side."

So we said, but not so have we done. How often we act as if we had not the living Christ to run to! We fret as if Jesus were still lying in the sepulchre. We act as if we were going to live here for ever, and did not expect our Lord to come and take us away to be with him. We act as if we had no Master but our own wanton will. We act despairingly as if we had no Shepherd to take care of us, and no Saviour who had redeemed us with his precious blood. Come, brethren, this will never do. It is dishonourable to our Lord, and disgraceful to ourselves. You see the reason why the supper should have been instituted: our treacherous memories require it. Let us gather to it as to a most needful though right royal feast; for we have need to be reminded of our own dear Lord, who sweetly says to us, "This do in remembrance of me."

II. And now I take a second point. I want to show you all that THE MODE WHICH OUR LORD HAS ORDAINED OF HELPING OUR MEMORIES IS IN ITSELF EXCEEDINGLY STRIKING. It could not be more so. If I stood opposite to an altar garnished with paper roses and other childish things, and if I were to try and perform, before you all, some of these prettinesses which are considered sacred by the followers of Rome, I should want a long time to explain it all to you; and when I had done my best, you would not be able to make head or tail of it. I have stood and watched the Catholic priest at the altar with the earnest desire to see if there was anything to be learned, and I could not learn anything. I could not make out what the ornamental person was at. I think I have read as much as most people about such things; but it does seem to me that if the behaviour of the priest at the mass be a symbol, it is a very dark one: if it is intended to teach the people, they need to know a great deal before they can learn anything from it. Surely to find anything in the mass, the devout must bring it with them, for there is nothing there. But if you take the cloth

from yonder table, you will see before you simply bread and wine; and when you see us celebrate the ordinance to-night, you will notice that we do nought but break the bread and eat it, and pass round the wine-cup and drink therefrom. All that is done is *extremely simple;* and the Saviour seemed to wish for that simplicity, because he was himself a very simple, unaffected, plain man. All the pomp that he ever had was when he rode through Jerusalem; but it was on a colt, the foal of an ass. Even then all the pomp consisted in this, that the people laid their garments in the road and strewed branches along the way in the excess of their joy. Golden ornaments, and flowers, and incense, and acolytes are far removed from his plain and natural habits. Only fancy some of his disciples rising from the dead and stepping into—well—St. Paul's cathedral, which is called Protestant, but is about as Popish as it very well can be. Supposing they walked in there—James and John together—the two sons of Zebedee. Perhaps, stopping before some of the pretty things, James would wonderingly ask, "John, where have we got?" And John would say, "We are in a chamber of imagery, a temple of idols. Our Lord Jesus would not be happy here." "Why," says James, "it is Paul's church; fetch him in." Surely when Paul came in, and looked at all those images and decorations, he would say, "Here I see another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." That is putting it mildly. We are getting to have the idolatries of Rome set up in the churches called national; and this is not done by those called, outwardly and honestly, Romanists, but by those who are really so in their hearts, and yet wear the Protestant name. The Lord Jesus Christ was just a simple peasant at Galilee, and the dress he wore was analogous to our common smock-frock, a garment "without seam, woven from the top throughout." There was not a bit of stateliness or affectation about him; and in all that he ordained you cannot find one single pompous ceremony. His followers were baptized in water, but where did he ordain salt, and oil, and spittle? Where did he bid them make the sign of the cross or set forth sponsors? His followers gathered for worship and sang hymns in his praise, but where were their "thurifers," and their "crucifers"? Where were "the stations of the cross"? Where are all these things in the Scriptures? They are inventions of later and darker days, but Jesus knew nothing of them; neither did his apostles and those who followed them know anything of such rubbish. It was all plain telling out of the dear love of God to men, and of how men should love one another, and love Jesus as their Saviour; and that was all. Our Lord instituted this simple supper as the memorial of a plain, simple, honest Saviour, who had no gaudy tricks or priestcraft about him, but was simply a man among men.

But, next, our Lord's Supper was intended to be very *frequent.* "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." He has laid down no rule as to when we shall break bread; but the custom was certainly to break it on the first day of the week, and I think oftener, for it seems to me that they broke bread from house to house. It was not a ceremony that required a minister or a priest. When believers were together they broke bread in memory of Christ—any

two or three of them—and so they remembered him. It is most delightful, when travelling, to remember Christ in your own room, where two or three brethren meet together. You have nothing to do but to break bread and drink wine in remembrance of him. I know of nothing more sweet or more instructive than this divine ordinance, which grows more impressive the oftener you attend to it. It ought to be frequent. Our Scotch friends were wrong as wrong could be in having it so seldom; but they are mending. The frequency of it is to show how often we need to be reminded of our dear Lord, for we are prone to forget him. We ought always to remember him; and therefore an institution intended to keep up our memory should be frequently used. Since he bids his disciples do it often, there is an instruction in it that we should constantly remember him in our inmost souls. Inasmuch as he gave this for a memorial, and for nothing else, and gave it to all his disciples, bidding all his followers, until he should come, do this in remembrance of him, it was to show that we all need to remember him, and all need help to do so. We are all forgetful: the best Christian, highest in grace, still needs this memorial, for he is apt to forget. Backsliding Christians need it, if possible, still more, that their failing memories may be revived. Sinners will do well to look upon it, for it may be that the memorials of the Lord's death may cause them to remember their sins, and turn to their Saviour.

But to come a little closer to the table. I want you to notice that when our Lord bids us remember himself—"This do in remembrance of *me*"—he gives us an ordinance which *brings before us his death*. Now, this, though it looks a very trite saying, is a very important point. The bread is his flesh, the wine his blood. They represent those two things. But they are separated: the bread is not in the wine, nor the wine in the bread. The two in separate vessels represent a body with the blood separated from it, and thus they are the token of death. Very well, then. When the Lord says, "This do in remembrance of me," he gives us a memorial of his death, which plainly teaches us that the chief point of remembrance in our Lord Jesus is his death. He himself regarded his death as the very centre, heart, and soul of what he would fix on our memories. Therefore those who say that his example is everything, or his teaching is everything, do greatly err; for when we remember him, the first thing to be remembered is, "He hath redeemed us to God by his blood." "Redeemer" is the name to which our memories must most tenaciously cling. His blood, his redemption, his atonement, his substitutionary sacrifice are always to be kept to the front. "We preach Christ crucified," and you believe in Christ crucified. The reason of our success under God in this house of prayer is, that we have always preached Christ as the atoning sacrifice, the sinner's substitute; and whosoever shall preach this boldly, clearly, and thoroughly, putting it as the crown of the gospel system, shall find God bless his word. As for you, if you would have comfort, and joy, and peace, cling to the cross; look steadily to the accepted sacrifice. Never get away from your Lord Jesus; and when you remember him, let his passion be the main thought which rises before you.

Next, notice another thing: *this festival reminds us of the covenant of grace.* Our Lord Jesus Christ, while he bade us remember himself, said of the cup, "This cup is *the new covenant* in my blood." That is the word. Read "testament," if you prefer it; but I feel sure you are nearer the sense when you read "the new *covenant* in my blood." What, then? When I am to remember Jesus himself, I am to take the cup which is the token of the covenant. Ah, beloved! you cannot know Christ thoroughly unless you understand the doctrine of the two covenants, and connect him with the covenant of grace. You must know that "covenant, ordered in all things, and sure"; for the cup is to remind you of it, by reminding you of him. Christ is best seen when you see him in his covenant relationship. Do you all know about that covenant? You know there was a covenant made with Adam in which we were all included; but that covenant failed. Father Adam broke it, and we all lost the blessing which his obedience would have procured us. There is another covenant made with the second Adam, Christ Jesus, and because he has kept the covenant, all that are in that covenant stand for ever in him. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive" who are in Christ. The one covenant ruined all that were in it; the second covenant saves all that are in it. As we take that cup, we do own and accept joyfully our interest in that covenant which was made with Christ, which is established on the sure foundation of his perfect obedience. Behold the blood of the everlasting covenant! May the Lord Jesus be brought to your memory to-night as your covenant head and surety; and as you drink of the cup, may you feel confidence and joy in him who is your Surety! May your soul sing, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. This is all my salvation, and all my desire." You see, then, the oceans of instruction which lie in one of the emblems. Lose none of it.

But there is yet one more thing. It is this. You are taught by this institution that *the very best way in which you can remember Christ is by receiving him.* Oh the sweetness of that truth if you will remember it when you come to this table! You are not asked to bring bread with you. It is here. You are not asked to bring a cup with you. It is here already provided. What have you to do? Nothing but to eat, and to drink. You have to be receivers, and nothing more. Well, now, whenever you want to remember your Lord and Master, you need not say, "I must do something for him." No, no, let him do something for you. "Take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."

> "The best return for one like me,
> So wretched and so poor,
> Is from his gifts to draw a plea,
> And ask him still for more."

Lord, I cannot love thee as I would love thee, but I can accept thy love. Let thy love drop into my heart just now. Lord, I cannot serve thee as I would, but I adore thee because thou dost become my servant, and wash my feet as thou didst thy disciples'. Lord, I

cannot bring thee coals of fire out of my chilly heart; but here is my heart, come thou, and cast the coals of fire of thine own divine love into it!

O my brethren, come and receive; come and receive! Now, I think this is a very sweet intimation to those of you who feel as if you had nothing to come with. You do not need to come with anything except your hunger and thirst. A man that is invited to a meal need not say, "Oh, but I have no bread." You are asked to a royal feast, and you need not bring bread with you. He that invites you to his table will provide you with all you want; and, when you desire to remember him, your surest and best plan is to enjoy the good things which he sets before you. I have thus shown how suitable the ordinance is to help our memories.

III. Now, lastly, THE OBJECT FOR WHICH WE ARE TO COME, NAMELY, TO REMEMBER CHRIST, IS ONE WHICH IS IN ITSELF MOST INVITING. Let me show you what I mean. There is one here who cries, "I have forgotten my Saviour. I did love him. I hope my love has not quite gone, but I seem to be very chill and cold. Alas! I have forgotten my Lord." Where should you go to have that love revived and refreshed? Should you not come where you will be helped to remember him? He says, "This do in remembrance of me." You say that you have forgotten your Lord. Come, and remember him again. Do not stay away, but come with all the more eagerness. Remember him as you did at first, when you came laden with guilt, and full of fears, and when you just cast yourself upon your Lord, and found peace. Come, and rest in him over again. Dear brother, you that are afraid that your first profession was a mistake, come and begin again at the table. We have got into midsummer, and the plants put out the midsummer shoot, you know: I want you to put out new shoots also. What! do you say that it is long since you thought of growing? It is time to think of it again. If the spring shoot seems to have grown old, now is the time for a midsummer shoot, for a new beginning. Begin with Christ over again. Repent and do your first work. "This do in remembrance of me." Does not that exactly suit you who fear that you have for a while forgotten him?

"Oh, but I feel so weak." Yes, but when a little child is very weak, there is still one thing which it can surely do: it can remember its mother. Memory is often quickened by our need: it is well when our sense of weakness makes us remember where our great strength lieth. Remember then the Lord who is your strength and your song, for he also hath become your salvation. Now, you poor little weak ones, where are you to-night? How gladly would I help you; but what better help can you desire than that which your Lord sets before you in these dear memorials of his death! I know that some of you have been cruelly pushed about of late. The strong ones have said sharp things to you. Your Lord invites you to a cheering exercise, which shall help you to forget the ill-behaviour of the proud. Poor, timid, trembling, half-believing, half-doubting one, and yet truly the Lord's, come to the table, come to remember your loving Redeemer! It is painful to remember yourself, but it will be sweet to remember him. "Oh," say you, "I cannot forget him." I am glad

you cannot. Still, come hither and indulge your memory to-night, and say—

"Gethsemane, can I forget,
Or there thy conflict see,
Thy agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember thee?
When to the cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God, my Sacrifice,
I must remember thee."

There is one more thing I am going to say, and I feel half ashamed to say it. Some professedly Christian people urge that they cannot come to the table because there are certain persons there who, in their judgment, should not be allowed to come. Is the Lord's table to be a judgment-seat, whereat we are to revise the verdict of the church? "I cannot," said one to me, "join a church, because I cannot find one that is perfect." No, I said, and if you do not join a church till you do find a perfect one, you must wait till you get to heaven; and, besides, my dear friend, if you ever find a perfect church they will not take *you* in; for I am sure they would not be perfect any longer if they did. One sickly sheep would then have passed into the fold. So it is idle for you to be looking out for perfection.

"But there is a person at communion who acted inconsistently." That is highly probable; and he may be wearing your coat, and looking out of your eyes. If you know of any case of open sin, let the elders of the church be informed, and it will be dealt with tenderly and firmly. In so large a church as this there may be cases of evil living not known to the overseers of the flock; but we invite the co-operation of all in maintaining the purity of the entire body, and we trust that we have it. But now, really what have you to do with the faults of others when you are remembering Christ Jesus? Surely this is the most unseasonable time for harsh judgments, or indeed for any judgments. I know many a brother with whom I could not agree in certain points, but I agree with him in remembering the Lord Jesus. I could not work with him in all things; but if he wants to remember Jesus, I am sure I will join him in *that*. It will do him good, and it will do me good, to think of Jesus. That dear name is so sweet to me that I will remember Jesus with the poorest, meanest, and most imperfect of mortals.

I am never happier than when I am in your midst, my beloved brethren, and we all sit around the table, because I think of all the Lord has done for you and for me. Why, it is not worth while going to heaven alone. A little lost child sits down on the doorstep of a West-end mansion and cries because it is so lonely: is that to be our position in heaven? Are we to take no friends there with us? Who wants to be solitary in the New Jerusalem? But oh, to come with all of you to the table, and to look into the faces of all God's people, and to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is in each one of them! They are a poor lot, full of mistakes, full of errors, full of infirmities, just like their minister; but the Lord has loved them, and bought them with his blood. A precious Christ he is, not only to have saved

me, but tens of thousands of his saints everywhere; for there are people of his in all churches, even in the churches that are most full of error. He has redeemed by his precious blood his own elect in the midst of them all. Why, the sight of you helps me to recollect Jesus, and to get a better idea of him—both your Christ, and my Christ; and not our Christ alone, but the Christ of all the myriads redeemed by blood. Shall I then set myself up for a judge, and say, "No, I will not remember my Lord, because one of the brethren does not behave properly"? What would you say to your child if he said, "Father, I shall not come to see you on your birthday; I shall not join with the rest of the family in the usual festival"? Why not? "Because my brother is not what he ought to be; and till he mends his ways, I shall not keep your birthday." Your father would say, "My dear son, is that any reason why you should not remember *me?* Surely I am not to blame for what your brother does. Come to the feast, and think of me." So do I say to you if you have any personal angers and differences, do not smother them, but end them. Do not come to the table till you have got rid of them, for you have no right to come; but end all wrath at once. Get rid of every ugly feeling you have towards everybody in the world, and love all believers in Christ for Christ's sake, and then come to this table, and you will find it help you to remember your Master as you shall join with others who remember him. I think I may say that you will not be likely to see anybody at the table worse than yourself. So come along, and let not pride keep you back. May God's infinite mercy bless the Lord's Supper to the Lord's people!

And as for those that cannot come and remember him because they do not know him, may they this night go home and seek him; and if they seek him, he will reveal himself to them. If you desire Christ, Christ desires you. If you have a spark of love to him, he has a furnace full of love to you; and if you want to come to him and trust him to save you, come and welcome. The Lord bless you, for his name's sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xxii. 7—23; 1 Corinthians ii. 23—34.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—555, 804, 784.

THIS sermon is issued, not because Mr. Spurgeon has been unable to preach on the Sabbath, but because he has gone into the country for the week, and so was unable to prepare for the press the sermon of last Lord's-day. That sermon will appear, if the Lord will, with that of the following Sabbath, next week. There has been a request for a sermon upon the Lord's Supper, and here it is.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CROSSING THE JORDAN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 12TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it."—Joshua i. 10, 11.

THE story of the passage of the Jordan might instructively be used in many ways. It was a very wonderful event. It occurred on the tenth day of the first month, on the same day of the year as the passage of the Red Sea. Of that glorious miracle it was the fortieth anniversary, and you may very properly join the dividing of the Red Sea to that of the Jordan, for so the Holy Spirit has done in the one hundred and fourteenth Psalm: "The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back."

I am going to use the passage of the Jordan as our forefathers used to employ it, namely, as a type of our passage out of this world into the place appointed for our rest. Canaan is only measurably a type of that better land, for the Canaanite was still in the land, and Israel had to fight many a battle to obtain possession of the country. In our more perfect Canaan there are no enemies to encounter, no sins to struggle with, and no powers of darkness to conquer. Still, I think the type, if imperfect, has been so long established in the Christian church, and has yielded so much of edification to godly people, that I may safely use it. We cannot afford to give up such a hymn as—

> "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
> And cast a wishful eye
> To Canaan's fair and happy land,
> Where my possessions lie."

Nor can we cease to sing with Watts—

> "Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
> Stand dress'd in living green;
> So to the Jews old Canaan stood
> While Jordan rolled between."

The Israelites, before they crossed the Jordan, had notice given them. The officers went through the host with the message, "Prepare you

victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan." The Lord often favours his people with notice that the time of their departure is at hand. He has fixed the hour of our entrance into rest, and it can neither be postponed by skill of physician nor hastened by malice of foe. No Satanic force can hurl us to the grave before our time.

"Plagues and death around us fly,
Till he bids we cannot die."

In due time there comes a whisper in the ear of the believer, "Rise up, and come away." Mr. Bunyan describes the pilgrims as tarrying on the shore of that river which parted them from the celestial country until a post came to one and another, announcing that the silver cord must be loosed and the golden blow be broken. Father Honest, and Mr. Ready-to-halt, and Christiana, and the rest of them, received each one a call from the hill country, and passed over the black water to the golden strand, where the shining ones stood to meet them. Peradventure some of us may get no such summons; for we may be taken away on a sudden. Many good people daily pray against sudden death, and there are legitimate reasons for so doing; but to a child of God it is of small consequence, for death will never find him unprepared if he is living in communion with God. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, an abundant entrance will be ministered to us into eternal glory should we fall dead in a moment. The change would simply mean going from the lower room of our Father's house into an upper chamber more bright and beautiful, but still a part of the same house. A few Sunday evenings ago, when I was unable to preach to you, my beloved and esteemed friend, Mr. Newman Hall, most generously occupied this pulpit, and his sermon touched upon heaven, and the joyous entrance of the saints into the immortal state. One of our sisters was greatly rejoiced by that sermon. She went home, and in going into her bedroom she fell down and entered in a second into rest. Possibly that sermon was to her a stray note from the harps of angels to call her home. We, too, may have such a speedy summons; or we may have months of waiting. What matters? Let the angelic convoy appear when our best Beloved shall see fit: it shall be no question of preference with us whether the Master shall call us to-day, to-morrow, or in twenty years. Let him call us at cock-crowing, or at midnight, or mid-day, we will answer him, "Here am I; for thou didst call me." We will enter into the joy of our Lord, and be for ever with him. When God's children have their candle lighted for them, and they know that it is time to go upstairs, they feel glad to end their pilgrimage, and rest in Jesus. We are all of us much nearer home than we think. It will be greatly wise to talk with our last hours, and to anticipate that time when the message shall come, "Within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan." May the Holy Spirit make our meditation profitable in view of our end!

We shall *observe the tenor of this notice;* and then *observe the sequel of this notice.* May we have grace given us to understand what we speak and hear, and to make use of it for our everlasting benefit.

I. First, OBSERVE THE TENOR OF THIS NOTICE. Notice that there are three leading words in it: "prepare," "pass over," "possess."

"Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land."

The first word that came to them was, "*Prepare.*" *Be in journeying order.* The soldier carries his rations with him when he has to make a quick march: "Prepare you victuals." Children of God, be ready to go from this world. Let not your roots strike deep into this earthly soil, for you must in due time be transplanted; and the more root-hold you get to this world, the worse it will be for you. Hold everything with a loose hand. The soldier in a foreign land must not settle down, and begin to gather surroundings about him which would naturalize him in the country. He is an alien, tarrying till his prince shall call him back to the home country. You cannot be in exile long. Heaven is prepared to receive you. Be ready! Your heart is in heaven, send your best goods thither, where they will be safe from moth and rust. Have about you what little things you want for spending money, but make the best of your way through this Vanity Fair. Keep in marching order; be prepared at a moment's notice to start on your way.

But inasmuch as he said, "Prepare you victuals" did he not mean "*Begin to feed on food of that sort upon which you are henceforth to live*"? The manna would cease in three days, and never fall again. After they crossed the Jordan, they would feed on the corn of the land. Manna was the staple of their wilderness food; but they had eaten other things as well, for they had flocks and herds. They were to prepare, not manna, for that would not keep above a day, but such food as ordinarily they would subsist upon when they entered upon their estates. O children of God, get good meals of spiritual meat, the kind of meat which you will live upon hereafter. Feed much on the love of God, and the glorious truths which are laid up in Christ Jesus. Care nothing for the husks of human thought and carnal eloquence, but take to the solid meat, which is to be your dainty nourishment when you dwell in the presence of God for ever. I wish that professing Christians were more cautious about what they feed on. I am afraid that some professors, if they hear a sermon, are satisfied, whatever the sort may be. They do not care what the doctrine may be, if a clever man talks prettily, and gratifies their ear. Some people can eat sawdust, and make a meal of shadows. I could almost wish it were true of them, that they could drink any deadly thing, and it should not hurt them; for assuredly they do drink very deadly things when they go to the tavern of modern thought. But I would say to you this morning, feed on Christ, feed on spiritual food, feed on the pure truth of God's Word, and feed your souls on nothing else. Know the taste of what you eat, and let it be as clear and definite as that of butter and honey, that so you may readily refuse the evil and choose the good.

Joshua meant—*Stand ready*, for the time is getting very short. There is not long to wait. Very soon you will have traversed the stream, and landed on the hither shore. Even now you can catch a glimpse of the palm trees of Jericho on the other side; but in three days you shall gather their fruit. Beloved, how would you feel if you knew that, within three days, you must die? Would you welcome

the news? Are you quite sure that it would please you? Remember the wife and family, and the business, and all that! Can you bear the snapping of the ties which bind you to this life? Have you learned so to live in this world that you are not of it? Could you cheerfully say, "For ever with the Lord. Amen, so let it be"? Oh, that God may keep us so watchful that the shortest summons may be long enough!

The exhortation given in the thirteenth verse is one which may be useful also to us. "*Remember the word.*" It is a grand help for going over Jordan, if we will remember the word of the Lord. Our faith enables us both to live and to die on the promise of God. "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land." If a man forgets the word of the Lord, and comes to die, he dies in a pitiable plight; for without the light of the word, he takes a leap in the dark. If a man can refresh his memory with the grand truths of the covenant, if he can come to the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, then he may bravely die. Israel might go down the shelving banks of the rushing river, because the Lord had given the nation a promise concerning the other side. I said to a dying friend, "Have you no fears"? "Fears!" he said, "How can I have any? You have fed me upon such solid food that I am not afraid to die. Jesus bore my sins in his own body on the tree, and I am accepted in him." Neither will you be fearful, beloved, if you have provided for your journey such food as the Lord has stored up in his Word.

But then he said also, third chapter and fifth verse, "*Sanctify yourselves.*" If we knew we were to die in three days, should we not wish to put our hearts, our thoughts, our families, into a better state? I remember a sister, by no means superstitious, who, when she came to die, was very earnest that all her linen, and everything about her body, should be white and clean; and I somewhat sympathized in her feeling, because I knew that it was only the outward expression of her inward desire to be purely arrayed as to her spirit. Since we may die suddenly, let us purify ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Let us pray our Lord to wash us again; and, as our dear brother prayed just now, "may the dust of our last day's march be taken from our feet!" If there has been any neglect of duty, let us be quick to perform that which has been delayed. Beloved, in the prospect of going home sanctify yourselves. May the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier, so cleanse us that we may be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

The next word was, "*Pass over this Jordan.*" They were *not called to linger on the brink*, nor to sit with their feet in the stream, but to cross over it. Israel had been forty years in the wilderness, and surely that was long enough. Some of you have been fifty, sixty, seventy, perhaps eighty years in the desert; but when the summons shall come, you will have no more marchings over the burning sand, and no more fear of the fiery serpents and scorpions. "Within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan" will put an end to the wilderness trampings. Life is long enough if we have had grace enough. He

liveth long that liveth well. He who hath served his God with all his heart will not wish to linger a moment after his life-work is done. You are not called to linger on the bed of sickness for ages, but to pass over to your rest.

And notice, the call was *not to go down into the Jordan to stop there.* Blessed be God, we are not going down into the grave to be lost there; but we make use of it as an opened door to Paradise. Our spirit shall mount triumphantly to Christ, and even the poor body, after it has lain a while in the dust, shall rise again in the glorious image of Christ. The grave is the refining pot which puts away the dross from the gold. Death, before we knew the Saviour, was like a vast cavern, into which there were many footprints, but all the tracks led inward: none came forth from the gloomy abode of the shades. But now, by the power of our Lord's resurrection, looking into the cave, we perceive that he has pierced the hills of darkness, and made a way for us to the other side. We go into what looks like a dark den, but we come out at the other side into the land that floweth with milk and honey. "Ye shall pass over this Jordan."

Our text reads like a promise—"Within three days ye *shall* pass over this Jordan." Some of them might have said, "How?" *They saw no apparent means*—no bridge, no pontoons, no ferry-boat. Ah! but says Joshua, "Within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan"; and the word was true. Do you say, "I do not see how I am to be helped to die"? The Lord will give dying grace in dying moments. He comes in when the need is pressing. Those who have wrestled earnestly in life shall march off triumphantly in death. Jehovah Shaddai is God All-sufficient. He knows how to take you through the river. Let not your heart be troubled. It is not yours to make a way through the deep waters: that remains with God alone. It is yours to obey, it is his to provide. Sometimes you are so foolish as to try your hand at providing, and then you neglect the obeying, and as a consequence you fail both in the providing and the obeying. Mind your own business, and the Lord will perform his word. Israel marches, Jehovah clears the way, and a glorious result is brought about.

Somebody might have said, "We cannot pass over Jordan, for *the torrent is furious, and the river is unusually swollen.*" In the spring, at the time of barley harvest, Jordan overflows all its banks, and becomes a river which only the very strongest of David's heroes could ford. So some child of God might say, "But my prospect in dying is darker than that of any other believer. I shall suffer more pain, more depression, more poverty; and thus to me Jordan everfloweth all its banks." Yes, yes; but still you shall go over it, for the Lord hath said it, and none of his words shall fail. You shall cross the swollen torrent and smile at your own fears. While I was thinking this over, I said to myself, "Why did the Lord bring his people to Jordan at the time when the snow was melting on the Lebanon, and therefore the river was more full, and the current more strong than usual?" There was ample reason. It was then that the early harvest was ripening throughout the country. Suppose there had been no corn in the fields ready for reaping, how would the children of Israel have

been fed when they were across the river and the manna had ceased? Their food stood in the fields ready to be gathered, and immediately they ate of the produce of the land. God knows the best time for his saints to die. We look at some ugly circumstance connected with their departure, and we forget other and infinitely more important matters which make it a thing to be rejoiced in. So you, dear friend, need not fear to pass over Jordan though it has filled all its banks, since there is a reason for it, and a graciously sufficient one. God will give you extraordinary help in extraordinary trial, and glorify himself in you.

"Oh," but they might have said, "We cannot pass over Jordan, *because there is Jericho right in front of us*, and of course the inhabitants will call in the Jebusites, who are not far off, at Jerusalem, and these will fetch in the Hivites, and the Amorites, and all the other nations; and these will hotly dispute the passage of the river, and it will be out of the question to force our way through that torrent, and fight up the other bank against such foes." Such a fear would be most natural. When Cæsar tried to land in England, what did the Britons do? They rushed into the water off Dover, to meet the Romans, and they fought with them in the surf of the sea. It was natural that brave men should fight the invaders in the water, and not suffer them to tread their soil. Do you suppose that the Canaanites were less brave than the ancient Britons? Had there not been a spell upon them, they would have pressed back Israel in the river itself, and would not have allowed them to enter the land. Yet Israel passed over Jordan at the appointed time. God had said "Ye shall go over," and they did go over; and no Canaanite, Hivite, or Jebusite, dared to molest them. So the poor child of God sighs, "Alas! when I come to die, Satan will meet me, temptations and doubts and fears will rush upon me." We read in the third chapter of Joshua, sixteenth verse, "And the people passed over right against Jericho." Fear not, O trembling heart. God can so deal with evil spirits, and with the doubts of your own spirit, that they shall be still as a stone till you have passed over. No demon shall dare to peep or mutter. No doubt or fear shall venture near. We read, "All the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." Not an arrow or a stone came from over the walls of Jericho. Glory be to the name of the Lord, he made the hearts of Israel's enemies to melt, so that no more courage remained in them. Thus far upon the second word, "Ye shall pass over."

The third word was "*possess*." They were to pass the river to possess the land which God had given them. We possess nothing here. Those goods which we think we possess melt away like an icicle from a hot hand. Like birds on the ploughed field, which are gone the moment we clap our hands, so do riches take to themselves wings and fly away. Such things are poor stuff to call possessions. But we have on the other side of Jordan treasures worth owning. By a covenant of salt, God has given us in Christ Jesus everlasting rest, triumph, happiness, glory. There was in Palestine a portion of land for each man of Israel: so is there in heaven a heritage appointed for each one of the Lord's people. There is a crown in heaven that

nobody's head can wear but mine, a harp that nobody's hand can play but mine, and a mansion that no man may enter but myself alone. I believe the same of each of you, my brothers and sisters, who are in Christ Jesus. There is a heaven for all the saints, but there is also special joy and delight for each one of the redeemed: in my Father's house are many mansions. You have to go over Jordan, but you are not going away from home, you are returning to your Father's house. You are not going to a land of toil and poverty, sorrow and death; you are going to be for ever with the Lord, where no evil can reach you. If, then, the message should come to your ear to-day, "Within three days thou shalt pass over this Jordan," say to yourself, "It is well, for I shall behold the face of him I love, and meet with those who are redeemed by his blood."

Thus I have spoken to you upon the tenor of this notice; but I hear the bell strike the quarter, and therefore the voice of time bids me hasten on to a second most important matter.

II. I want you, now, to OBSERVE THE SEQUEL OF THIS NOTICE, or what followed upon the summons. I shall try to show what will follow to you who are in Christ. When you receive your notice to depart, what will happen to you?

The first thing that happened to Israel was this, *a singular faith was bestowed.* I can hardly believe that the people under Joshua were the children of those unbelieving Jews whose carcases fell in the wilderness; for throughout the early chapters of Joshua, it is recorded that they believed Joshua, whatever he said to them. He had strange and strong things to utter, but they did not doubt or demur. What pleases me most is that when he spoke to the Reubenites, and told them what they had to do, they said, "Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: *only be strong and of a good courage.*" Think of that! They took upon themselves to encourage Joshua, saying, "only be strong and of a good courage." They admonished the bravest of captains—even they who were but of the rank and file. Some of God's very poor and tried people are occasionally so full of faith and courage that they try to cheer up their minister. The children instruct the fathers. I like to see them thus returning the compliment, for it shows that they are in a happy condition themselves. If their simple cheer should seem superfluous to Joshua, yet it showed the honesty of their hearts and the fulness of their confidence in God. There was not a doubt or a fear throughout the whole camp. Now, beloved, when the children of God come to die, those of them who have been poor, trembling things before, receive new courage and unwonted strength, and even minister comfort to those who are stronger than themselves. It is brave to see how Mr. Ready-to-halt puts his crutches away when he is going over Jordan. Mr. Feeblemind bids them bury his feeble mind in a dung-hill, for it would be of no use to anybody. The Lord will give us more grace, and we shall wonder at ourselves that we could have been aforetime so distrustful. "At eventide it shall be light." It is wonderful to see how God's babes in Christ shoot up to six feet six in a short time. I do not know what change death itself makes in

the soul; but I believe that a little before death a wonderful advance is often made by the believer. The man of God matures at a marvellous rate; even as these Israelites, who had been so prone to murmur, were now filled with a unanimity of faith which is perfectly amazing. May God thus brace up our faith when the time comes.

Next, *a special assurance was given.* See the fifth verse of the third chapter—"To morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." When they should come to the last day of the three, great wonders would be seen. The Lord is always working marvels; but when we come to cross the Jordan we shall see his wonders in the deep. You have not seen the Lord yet, beloved, as you will see him as the great Wonder-worker. You have had a faint view of your God sometimes, and this has made you feel like David when he danced before the ark; but you shall soon have other and clearer views, and then you will long to mount like an angel, and veil your face in his nearer presence. You shall have such wonders revealed to you and in you, both of grace and glory, that your soul shall be ravished with delight. You shall see Jesus, and his love shall be more fully revealed to you. You shall begin to hear things which it is not lawful for a man to utter, and you shall feel glory begun below. Your death-day shall be your heavenly wedding-day, and your last day on earth shall be the best day you have ever spent on it. When you come close to heaven in point of time, heaven will come close to you in point of joy. With a strong faith, and a delightful assurance for that faith to feed upon, you will be blest indeed.

Next, note that the people *had with them a conquering leader.* Joshua was at their head, to encourage and direct them. When you and I shall pass over Jordan we shall have Jesus with us. Joshua is but another form of that dear name in which we triumph. He says, "Be of good cheer. Because I live, ye shall live also." He it is who cries, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." If our Joshua should seem to leave us, it will be on the flowery hill-side, or in the gardens of delight; but he will not even appear to do so when the dark waters flow at our feet, and we are called upon to pass through the stream. Blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ, he never forgets his own. He is always with us, but he is most clearly so when our last trouble is upon us. He is gone away into the hill country, to make ready the house where we shall shortly be at home; but he will surely come again, and receive us unto himself, that where he is there we may be also. Therefore, be not afraid, for Jesus is with you. Did I hear you say—

> "Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
> My soul would stretch her wings in haste,
> Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
> Nor fear the terror as she passed"?

Yes, Jesus will come and meet you, and you shall forget that you are dying, for the eternal life shall come streaming into your soul. The candle of your mortal existence shall expire without much note, for the glory of the Lord shall have risen upon you. The moans of expiring shall be swallowed up in the harmonies of the celestial choirs.

But what next? The Israelites had *a clear guidance afforded them.* Read the fourth verse of the third chapter. The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them, and a distance was set between them and the priests bearing the ark, so that they might show reverence to it, and might clearly see it as their guide. Thus said Joshua to them, "When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore."

You have been through many experiences, but to die will be a new one. You have traversed certain roads more than once or twice, but this road is new to you, and can only be trodden once. Once for all, you must cross this Jordan, therefore the divine presence shall go before you, and show you the way. The Lord will surely direct your steps. Do not begin saying to yourself, "What shall I do in sickness?" You will be guided by him who bore our sorrows and infirmities. "But what shall I do when the pulse is faint and low, and the death-sweat beads the brow?" He will show you what to do, for he also died. He knows what faintness, pain, thirst, and fever mean, for he has felt the same. In death, grace will be magnified to the uttermost. Some children of God are always delighted at the idea that Christ may come, and that they shall never die. I would be delighted if the Lord would come at once; but as to dying or not dying I do not care a jot. I think that of the two, it might be preferable to die, because those who die will have a kind of fellowship with Christ in his death which will not be experienced by those who never sleep in the tomb. They that are alive and remain till his coming will miss the privilege of actually passing through the tomb as the Saviour did, though even they must be changed. Brethren, we traverse a road which has known the feet of the Crucified. Where should the dying members rest but with their dying Head? Why should I fear to sleep where Jesus went to bed? Did he not leave the sheets behind? He laid the napkin by itself that mourners might wipe their eyes; but he laid the grave-clothes by themselves, that we might find in the grave a bed well furnished for our slumber. Oh, yes, you shall have divine direction when the darkness gathers about you!

With Israel *a forerunner led the way.* Was not that a glorious spectacle when the priests took up the golden staves, and with them lifted the ark upon their shoulders, and then in stately march carried it down to the river? No Israelite had to tread a novel path, or to make a road for himself. Our great High Priest has gone down to the river before us, and has touched its waters with the soles of his feet. "He has tasted death for every man." He went into the depths of death, and slept three days in the heart of the earth. The ark of the covenant leads the way, and we have only to follow.

Nor did the forerunner quit the scene, for *the divine presence remained.* The priests went on till they came to the river bed, and descended the hollow, going on to the very centre of it. There they stopped till all the host had passed over. Hour after hour the priests

remained with the holy burden on their shoulders: they stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan. First came the Reubenites and the half tribe of Manasseh marching by in military order, and then all the other tribes in succession; but the priests remained like statues, still bearing the ark, till the last Israelite had gone clean over Jordan. There stood the emblem of a covenant God, with its mercy-seat, its sacred law, and the rod of government. The Lord Jesus will go before you as your great High Priest, your propitiation and your covenant; and he will abide with you in the last solemn article until you are safe landed on the shore of the land of promise. The feeblest and least of all the host shall climb the celestial hills on the other side, and sing of everlasting love. O Lord my God, when my last hours shall come, let mine eyes behold the Lord Jesus and the covenant ordered in all things and sure.

"When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side!
Songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee."

In consequence of the priests going down into the river *the stream was dried up*. Wonderful sight it must have been to behold the waters roll back, and stand in a congealed heap! No less so if, as some think, the torrent rolled back some thirty miles, so that the Israelites could look right up a long roadway of dry river-bed. At the place where the great crystalline heap was piled up what an extraordinary wonder met the eye! Thus there was a broad passage-way for the multitudes of Israel to go marching through, and to effect the crossing rapidly. Suppose, when you come to die, the Jordan should turn out to be no river at all. What if you should go over dry-shod? Why should it not be so? It has often been the case with the Lord's chosen. Many make a joyful exit. A sister used to be much troubled about dying; she knew where she was going, but she dreaded the passage. She died in her sleep, and in all probability never knew when she passed from the one state to the other till she found herself among the angels. Death is a pin's prick to many. How many sing themselves into glory! and some, who could not sing themselves, have made others do so while they forded the stream. Surely we misrepresent death: he is to the believer no skeleton form, but the angel of the Lord come to gather the flowers of the Lord's garden. Death hath lost its terrors. "The sting of death is sin," and that is forgiven. "The strength of sin is the law," and that is fulfilled. The black waters have failed, we pass over Jordan dry-shod.

Then notice, *the people were very quick in crossing*. Death is short work. According to the tenth verse of the fourth chapter, we read: "And the people hasted and passed over." They did not hurry because they were afraid, but they hasted because they were many, and would fain be all over before the sun went down. They were eager to take possession of their country, and confident in marching upon Jericho where the first of their foes were entrenched. They went through the river at quick march, and came upon the other side at the

same rate. Of course it would take a considerable time with so vast a number to cross, but they were all moving on in an orderly and rapid manner. After all, what is the act of death? "What!" cries one, "is there not a terrible amount of pain connected with death?" I answer—No. It is life that has the pain; death is the finis of all pain. You blame death for a disease of which he is the cure. You imagine a thing called death, which does not really exist. In the twinkling of an eye we shall be up and away!

"One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks:
We scarce can say, 'He's gone,'
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the throne."

Therefore, because you will haste to pass over, you need not be alarmed at so short a trial, which will actually turn out to be no trial at all.

We read in the ninth verse of the fourth chapter, that the Israelites in traversing the Jordan *left a memorial behind.* Before they had quite passed out of the river bed, a number of chosen men looked out twelve of the great masses of rock which lay in the bottom of the river, and piled them on end upon each other, to remain as a perpetual memorial that Israel had been there. You also will bear your testimony in departing: you will set up your memorial for your children after you, and they shall say, "Our father died in sure and certain hope of being with Jesus." Perhaps some unconverted ones will be saved, after you are dead and gone, by your last testimony. Even if your death-bed should not be so bright as some, even its clouds may not be without their effect. A holy man had prayed much for his boys and girls, but never saw them converted, and this, with the troubles which grew out of their waywardness, made his last hours to be sadly clouded. For this cause he was sorely troubled, for he feared that it would confirm his sons in their unbelief. But mark how the Lord wrought! They buried their father, and when they were met together, the eldest son turned to his brothers and remarked upon the sorrows which had weighed down their father at the last. "Brothers," said he, "if our father, who was so good a man, was so troubled in death, what will become of us when we die?" This most reasonable remark was the means of the conversion of the brothers. I would like to die in the dark if it would bring all my people to the Saviour. Would not you? Apart from this, no doubt we shall set up stones in the midst of Jordan, and witness that the Lord is a faithful God.

One thing more: *they also raised a memorial on the other shore.* Twelve men took from the river twelve stones, and bore them on their shoulders before the ark. Can you not see them with their loads, and the ark coming up after them from the river-bed? They piled these twelve stones upon each other in Canaan. You and I, when we get to heaven, shall take our memorials with us, and pile them up. We will make known to angels, and principalities, and powers the manifold wisdom and goodness of God to us in life and death. I hope to begin to preach before long, not to this little

congregation of six thousand, but to countless multitudes of the redeemed in heaven. Myriads of angels will come together to hear how God made a worm to thresh the mountains, and helped a sinner to declare his love. You will stand with your groups about you, and shining ones will linger to hear of your salvation, your trials, your joys, and your achievements, or rather of what the Lord has wrought for you and by you; and so God will be glorified, and the other side of Jordan will be adorned with memorials to the measureless grace of God.

You will have to turn this subject over in your meditations: I have only been able to give you the rough outline of a sermon. Read the whole narrative with care, and may God bless it to you!

But, dear friends, *suppose you are not the people of God.* You will have to die all the same. One of these times you also will have to pass over the torrent. What a different lot will be yours! You will have to leave your possessions behind. A sage said to a worldling, when he looked over his beautiful gardens, "These are the things that make it hard to die." You will have to leave everything which you call your own here; and you have no possessions over yonder. You have no Joshua to be your leader, no priest to be your forerunner, no God in covenant to hold the ground for you: you have, in fact, nothing to overcome the bitterness of death. The water-floods will carry you away. The torrents will hurry you to the dead sea. Even now, when you are a little ill, and in pain, you become dreadfully frightened. If in the land of peace wherein you trusted they have wearied you, what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? The dark stream will not be dry for you. Dare you take the dreadful plunge? Mark how the black current rushes down to that dreadful sea of death! Are you resolved to be swept down to that place of desolation? The Lord have mercy upon you before you are drifted into the abode of the accursed! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." So saith the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Joshua iii., Psalm xxiii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—375, 114, 874.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SOWN AMONG THORNS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 19TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them."—Matthew xiii. 7.

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."—Matthew xiii. 22.

WHEN that which comes of his sowing is unfruitful, the sower's work is wasted: he has spent his strength for nought. Without fruit the sower's work would even seem to be insane; for he takes good wheat, throws it away, and loses it in the ground. Preaching is the idlest of occupations if the word be not adapted to enter the heart, and produce good results. O my hearers, if you are not converted, I waste time and energy in standing here! Men might well think it madness that one whole day in the week should be given up to hearing speeches: madness, indeed, it would be if nothing came of it to conscience and heart. If you do not bring forth fruit unto holiness, and the end is not everlasting life, I should be better employed in breaking stones on the road-side than in preaching to you.

Fruit-bearing made the difference appear in the various soils upon which the sower scattered seed. You would not so certainly have known the quality if you had not seen the failure or success of the seed. We do not know your hearts till we see your bearing towards the gospel. If it produces in you holiness and love to God and man, then we know that there is good soil in you: but if you are merely promising people, but not performing people, then we know that the ground of your heart is hard, or stony, or thorny. The word of the Lord tries the heart and reins of the children of men, and in this it is as the fire which distinguishes between metal and dross. O my dear hearers, you undergo a test to-day! Peradventure you will be judging the preacher, but a greater than the preacher will be judging you: for the Word itself shall judge you. You sit here as a jury upon yourselves: your own condition will be brought clearly out by the way in which you receive or refuse the gospel of God. If you bring forth fruit to the praise of God's grace, well; but if not, however you may seem to hear with attention, and may retain what you hear in your

memories, if no saving effect is produced upon your souls, we shall know that the soil of your heart has not been prepared of the Lord, but remains in its native barrenness.

What fruit have you borne hitherto from all your hearing? May I venture to put the question to each one of you very pointedly? Some of you have been hearers from your childhood—are you any the better? What long lists of sermons you must have heard by now! Count over your Sundays; how many they have been! Think of the good men now in heaven, to whom you once listened! Remember the tears that were drawn from you by their discourses! If you are not saved yet, will you ever be saved? If you are not holy yet, will you ever be holy? Why has the Lord spent so much on one who makes no return? To what purpose is this waste? Surely you will have much to answer for in that great day when the servants of God shall give in their accounts, and shall have no joy when they come to mention you. How will you excuse yourselves before God for having occasioned them so much disappointment?

At this time I will only deal with one class of you. I will not speak to those of you who hear the Word, and retain none of it because of the hardness of your hearts; such are the wayside hearers. Neither will I address myself to those who receive the truth with sudden enthusiasm, and as readily quit it when trial befalls them; such are the rocky-ground hearers. But I will deal with those of you who hear the Word attentively, and, in a sense, receive it into your hearts and understandings, so that the seed grows in you, though its fruit never comes to perfection. You are religious persons, and to all appearance you are under the influence of godliness. You exhibit plenty of leaf, but there is no corn in the ear, no substance in your Christianity. I cannot speak with any degree of physical vigour to you, by reason of the infirmity under which I struggle; but what I do say to you is steeped in earnest desire that the Lord may bless it to you. An eloquent congregation will make any preacher eloquent: help me then this morning. If you will give me your ear, you will make up for my deficiency of tongue: especially if you give to God your hearts, he will bless his truth, however feebly I may utter it.

First, I desire to talk to you a little about *the seed* which you have received; secondly about *the thorns;* thirdly about *the result.*

I. First a little about THE SEED. Remember, first, that *it was the same seed in every case.* Yonder it has brought forth thirty-fold; it was the same seed which was lost upon you. In a still better case, the seed has brought forth a hundred-fold; it was precisely the same corn with which your field has been sown. The sower went to his master's granary for all his seed; how is it that in your case it is all lost? If there were two gospels, we might expect two results without fault in the soil which failed. But with many of you to whom I speak there has been only one gospel throughout the whole of your lives. You have been attending in this house of prayer, where we have never changed our seed, but have gone on sowing the one eternal truth of God. Many have brought forth fruit a hundred-fold from the seed which has been scattered broadcast from this platform.

They heard no more than you have heard, but how much better they treated it than you have done! I want you to consider this. How covered with briars and thorns must your mind be that the gospel which converted your sister or friend never touched you! Though you may be nominally a believer in the Word of God, it has never so affected you as to make you gracious and holy. You are still a hearer only. How is this? The fault is not in the seed, for it is the same which has been so useful to others.

You have heard the gospel with *pleasure*. "Heard it!" you say, "I heard it when a little child." Your mother brought you to the house of God in her arms. You have heard it, and still hear it, though it is rather like an old song to you: but is this to be all? I am very grateful that you do hear the gospel, for I hope that one of these days God may cause it to grow in you, and yield fruit. But still a grave responsibility is upon you. Think how favoured you have been! How will you answer for this privilege if it is neglected and rendered useless by that neglect? Dear hearers, if we lived in the heart of Africa, and we died without believing in a Christ of whom we had not heard, we could not be blamed for that: but here we are in the heart of London, where the gospel is preached in all our streets, and our blood will be on our own heads if we perish. Do you mean to go down to hell? Are you so desperate that you will go thither wearing the garb of Christians? If you do persist in ruining your souls, my eyes shall follow you with tears· and when I cannot warn you any longer, I will weep in secret places because of your perversity.

Those described in my text were not only hearers, but in a measure *they accepted the good Word*. The seed fell not only on this ground, but into it, so that it began to grow. Of you it is true that you do not refuse the gospel, or raise disputes concerning it. I am glad that you have no difficulties about the inspiration of Scripture, or the Deity of our Lord, or the fact of his atonement. You do not befog yourself with "modern thought," but you avow your belief in the old, old gospel. So far so good; but what shall I make of the strange fact that your acceptance of the truth has no effect upon you? It is a very lamentable case, is it not, that a man should believe the gospel to be true, and yet should live as if it were a lie? If it be the truth, why do you not yield obedience to it? The man knows that there is an atonement for sin, but he has never confessed his sin, and accepted the great sacrifice. Those great truths, which circle about the cross like a coronet of stars, he has seen their beauty and enjoyed their brilliance, but he has never allowed their light to enter his heart, and find a reflection in his moral character. This is evil, only evil. If you believe the truth, what do you more than the devil? Nay, you are behind him, for he believes, *and trembles*, and you have not gone so far as the trembling. It should be so, that every great truth which is believed should influence the mind, sway the thoughts, and mould the life: this is the natural fruitage of great spiritual truth. The doctrine of grace, when it takes possession of the mind, and governs the heart, produces the purest results; but if it be held in unrighteousness, it is a curse rather than a blessing to have a head-

knowledge. Is it not a dreadful thing to believe God's revelation without receiving God's Spirit? This is to accept a well, but never to drink of the water; accept corn in the barn, and yet die of hunger. God have mercy upon the possessors of a dead faith!

The seed sown among thorns *lived and continued to grow.* And in many men's minds the gospel of divine truth is growing after a fashion: they understand it better, can defend it more valorously, and speak of it more fluently. Moreover, it does influence them in some form and degree, for gross vices are forsaken. They are decent imitations of believers: you can see the shape of an ear: the stalk has struggled up through the thorns until you can see its head, and are led to expect corn. But go to that apparent wheat-ear, and feel it: there are the sheaths, but there is nothing in them; you have all the makings of an ear of wheat, but it will yield no grain. I would speak to those before me who, perhaps, have been baptized, and are members of the church; I want to ask of them a question or two. Do you not think that there is a great deal of empty profession nowadays? Do you not think that many have a name to live and are dead? "Yes," say you, "I know a neighbour whom I judge to be in that condition." May not another neighbour judge the same of you? Would it not be well to raise the question about yourself? Have you really believed in the Lord Jesus? Are you truly converted from sin and self? Turn that sharp eye of yours homeward for a while. Examine your own actions, and judge your condition by them. Put yourself into the crucible. O my God, what if I should be a preacher to others, and should be myself a castaway! Will not every deacon and elder, and every individual church-member, speak to himself after the same fashion. You will go to your Sunday-school class this afternoon; will you be teaching the children what you do not know? You mean to go to a meeting this evening, and talk to others about conversion; will you be exhorting them to that which you have never yourself experienced? Will it be so? You do not need fine preaching, but you do need probing in the conscience. A thorough examination will do the healthy no harm, and it may bless the sick. "Lord, let me know the worst of my case," is one of my frequent prayers, and I suggest it to you.

So much then about the seed: it was good seed, it was sown, it was received by the soil, it grew and promised well, but yet in the end it was unfruitful. No doubt multitudes, who receive Christianity, become regular attendants at our place of worship, and are honest in their moral character; but Christ is not all in all to them; he holds a very secondary place in their affections. Their wheat is overshadowed with a thicket of thorns, and is so choked that it comes to nothing. Their religion is buried beneath their worldliness. Sad will their end be. God in mercy save us from such a doom!

II. But now, secondly, I would speak a little about THE THORNS. They are by Matthew described as "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches." Luke adds, "and pleasures of this life"; and Mark still further mentions, "the lusts of other things." I suppose that the sower did not see any thorns when he threw the handful of corn; they had all been cut down level with the surface.

He probably hoped that it was all good ground, and therefore he sowed it, little suspecting that the thorns were in possession.

Note well that *thorns are natural to the soil.* Since the fall these are the first-born children of the ground. Any evil which hinders religion is not at all an extraordinary thing—it is what we ought to expect among fallen men. Grace is an exotic; thorns are indigenous. Sin is very much at home in the human heart; and, like an ill weed, it grows apace. If you wish to go to heaven, I might take a little time to show you the way, and I should need to stir you up to diligence; but if you must needs go to hell—well, "easy is the way to destruction"—it is only a little matter of neglect. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Evil things are easy things: for they are natural to our fallen nature. Right things are rare flowers that need cultivation. If any of you are being injured by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, I am not astonished; it is natural that it should be so. Therefore, be on your guard against these mischiefs. I pray you say to yourself, "Come, there is something in this man's talk. He is very slow and dull, but still there is something in what he says. I may, after all, be tolerating those thorns in my heart which will kill the good seed, for I am of like passions and infirmities with other men." I beseech you look to yourselves, that you be not deceived at the last.

The thorns were already established in the soil. They were not only the natural inhabitants of the soil, but they were rooted and fixed in it. Our sins within us claim the freehold of our faculties, and they will not give it up if they can help it. They will not give way to the Holy Spirit, or to the new life, or to the influences of divine grace, without a desperate struggle. The roots of sin run through and through our nature, grasp it with wonderful force, and keep up their grasp with marvellous tenacity. O my dear hearer, whoever you may be, you are a fallen creature! If you were the Pope himself, or the President of the United States, or the Queen of England, it would be true of you that you were born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and your unregenerate heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. The established church of the town of Mansoul has the devil for its archbishop. Sin has enclasped our nature as a boa-constrictor encircles its victim; and when it has maintained its hold for twenty, forty, or sixty years, I hope you are not so foolish as to think that holy things will easily get the mastery. Our evil nature is radically conservative, and it will endeavour to crush out every attempt at a revolution by which the grace of God should reign through righteousness. Wherefore, watch and pray, lest temptation choke that which is good in you. Watch earnestly, for grace is a tender plant in a foreign soil, in an uncongenial clime; while sin is in its own element, and is strongly rooted in the soil.

Do you know why so many professing Christians are like the thorny ground? It is because processes have been omitted which would have gone far to alter the condition of things. It was the husbandman s business to uproot the thorns, or burn them on the spot. Years ago, when people were converted, there used to be such a thing as conviction of sin. The great subsoil plough of soul-anguish was

used to tear deep into the soul. Fire also burned in the mind with exceeding heat: as men saw sin, and felt its dreadful results, the love of it was burned out of them. But now we are dinned with braggings about rapid salvations. As for myself, I believe in instantaneous conversions, and I am glad to see them; but I am still more glad when I see a thorough work of grace, a deep sense of sin, and an effectual wounding by the law. We shall never get rid of thorns with ploughs that scratch the surface. Those fields grow the best corn which are best ploughed. Converts are likely to endure when the thorns cannot spring up because they have been ploughed up. Dear hearer, are you undergoing to-day a very severe conviction of sin? Thank God for it. Are you in awful trouble and anguish? Do not think that a calamity has happened to you. May God himself continue to plough you, and then sow you, and make sure work in you for years to come! So you see these thorns were natives, and old-established natives, and it would have been well had they been cut up.

The thorns were bound to grow. There is an awful vitality in evil. First the thorns sent up a few tiny shoots. These shoots branched out, and more and more came to keep them company, till the wheat stood as a lonely thing in a thicket of briars, and was more and more overtopped and shadowed by them. The thorns aspired to the mastery, and they soon obtained it; and that done, they set to work to destroy the wheat. They blocked it up, crowded it out, and some of the thorn-shoots twisted around it, and held the wheat by the neck till it was choked.

The thorns sucked away all the nutriment from the wheat, and it was starved; for there is only a certain quantity of nourishment in the soil, and if the thorns have it, the wheat must go without it. There is only a certain amount of thought and energy in a man; and if the world gets it, Christ cannot have it. If our thoughts run upon care and pleasure, they cannot be eager about true religion: is not that clear? That is the way in which those thorns served the wheat; they starved it by devouring its food, and they choked it by keeping off the air and sun; and the poor thing became shrivelled and weak, and quite unable to produce the grain which the sower expected of it. So it is with many professing Christians. They are at first worldly, but not so very worldly. They are fairly religious, though by no means too zealous. They seek the pleasures of the world, but by no means quite so much as others we could name. But very soon the thorns grow, and it becomes doubtful which will win, sin or grace, the world or Christ. Two masters there cannot be; and in this case it is specially impossible, since neither of the contending powers will brook a rival. Sin has sprung from a royal, though evil stock, and if it be in the heart, it will struggle for the throne. So it came to pass that the tares, being tolerated, choked the good seed.

Let me describe these thorns a little. Putting together Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we find that there were four sorts of thorns. The first is called "*The care of this world.*" This assuredly comes to the poor: they are apt to grow anxious and mistrustful about temporal things. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal

shall we be clothed?" This trinity of doleful questions much afflicts many. But anxiety comes to rich people also. Care dwells with wealth as well as with poverty. "How shall I get more? How shall I lay it up? How shall I still increase it?"—and so on. It is "the care of the age" which we are most warned against. Each age has its own special fret. It is not a care for God—that is not the care of any age; but the care of the age is some vanity or another, and as a standing thing it is the ambition to keep up with your fellows, to be respectable, and to keep up appearances. This is the care which eats as doth a canker in the case of many. Grim care turns many a black hair white, and furrows many a brow. If you let care grow in your soul, it will choke up your religion: you cannot care for God and for Mammon too. "We must have care," says one. There is a care which is proper, and there is an anxiety which is improper. That is proper care which you can cast upon God—"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." That is an improper care which you dare not take to God, but have to bear yourself. Take heed of anxiety; it will eat the heart out of your religion.

There were others who felt "*the deceitfulness of riches.*" Our Lord does not say "riches," but "the deceitfulness of riches." The two things grow together: riches are evermore deceitful. They deceive people in the getting of them, for they judge matters very unfairly when a prospect of gain is before them. The jingle of the charming guinea, or of "the almighty dollar," makes a world of difference to the ear when it is hearing a case. Men cannot afford to lose by integrity, and so they take the doubtful way, and either sail near the wind, or speculate till it amounts to gambling. They would not endure the idea of such conduct, were it not that the hope of gain deceives them. Our line of conduct ought never to be ruled by gain or loss. Do right if the heavens fall. Do no wrong, even though a kingdom should be its reward. Men turn to Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," a wonderful book, and there they find certain laws which I believe to be as fixed and unalterable as the laws of gravitation; led on by the deceitfulness of riches, men make these laws into an excuse for grinding the faces of the poor. They might as well take people to the top of a rock, fling them down, and dash them to pieces, and then cry out, "This is the natural result of the law of gravitation." Of course, the law of gravitation operates remorselessly, and so will the law of supply and demand; but we must not use either of these laws as a cover for cruelty to the poor and needy: yet many do so through "the deceitfulness of riches."

Riches are very deceitful when they are gained, for they breed in men many vices which they do not themselves suspect. One man is purse-proud, but he thinks he is humble. He is a self-made man, and worships him that made him. Is it not natural that a man should worship his maker? In his heart he thinks: "I am somebody. I came up to London with half-a-crown in my pocket, and now I could buy a whole street!" People ought to respect a man of that kind, ought they not, even though he may have made his money by very queer practices? It little matters how you make money

nowadays: only get it, and you will have plenty of admirers, and the deceitfulness of riches will enable you to admire yourself. With pride comes a desire for wealthy society and vain company; and thus again religion receives severe injury. There is apt to grow up in the mind an idolatry of this world and its treasures. "I don't love money," says one. "You know it is not money that is the root of all evil, but the love of it." Just so; but are you sure that you do not love it? Your thoughts run a good deal after it. You hug it rather closely, and you find it hard to part with it. I will not accuse you; but I would have you awake to the fact that riches worm themselves into a man's heart before he is well aware of it.

You may perceive the deceitfulness of riches if you note the excuses which men make for getting so much and withholding it from the cause of God. "They intend to do a great deal of good with it." Did you hear the devil laugh? I am not speaking of many dear brethren in this place who are doing a great deal of good with their means; but I am speaking of those who are simply living to accumulate wealth, and say that they will one day do a great deal of good with it. They say so. Will it ever be more than saying? I fear that in this thing many rich men deceive themselves. They go on accumulating the means, but never using them: making bricks, but never building. All they will get will be a corner in "The Illustrated London News" to say that they died worth so much. O sirs, how can you be content thus to have your good things choked? Wherever this deceitfulness of riches is allowed the upper hand, it chokes the good seed. A man cannot be eager to get, and eager to keep, and eager to increase, and eager to become a millionaire, and at the same time be a true servant of the Lord Jesus. As the body grows rich the soul grows poor.

Luke tells us of another kind of weed, namely, "*the pleasures of this life.*" I am sure that these thorns play a dreadful part nowadays. I have nothing to say against recreation in its proper place. Certain forms of recreation are needful and useful; but it is a wretched thing when amusement becomes a vocation. Amusement should be used to do us good "like a medicine": it must never be used as the food of the man. From early morning till late at night some spend their time in a round of frivolities, or else their very work is simply carried on to furnish them funds for their pleasures. This is vicious. Many have had all holy thoughts and gracious resolutions stamped out by perpetual trifling. Pleasure so called is the murderer of thought. This is the age of excessive amusement: everybody craves for it, like a babe for its rattle. In the more sober years of our fathers, men had something better to live for than silly sports. The thorns are choking the age.

Mark adds, "*and the lusts of other things.*" I will not enumerate all those other things; but all things except the things of Christ and of the Father are "other things." If anybody spends his life on any object, however good, short of the glory of God, the good seed is choked by the inferior object. One person is eminently scientific, and he will do well if his science is used for holy purposes; but it can be used to choke the seed. One man is a great proficient in the arts, and

he does well if the arts are used as a mule for Christ to ride upon; but if art is to ride upon Christ, then it is ill enough. I met with a clergyman many years ago who was going a long distance to find a new beetle. He was a great entomologist, and I did not blame him for it, for to a thoughtful man entomology may yield many profitable lessons. But if he neglected his preaching to catch insects, then I do not wonder that a parishioner should wish that the beetles would nibble his old sermons, for they were very stale. I call it choking the seed when any inferior pursuit becomes the master of our minds, and the cause of God and truth takes a secondary place. The seed is choked in our souls whenever Christ is not our all in all. You see my drift: be it what it may—gain, glory, study, pleasure—all these may be briers that will choke the seed.

Mr. Jay was never more pleased than when at Bristol he had a note sent up to him which ran as follows:—"A young man, who is prospering in business, begs the prayers of God's people that prosperity may not be a snare to him." Take care that you look thus upon your prosperity. My dear friend, Dr. Taylor, of New York, speaks of some Christians nowadays as having a "butterfly Christianity." When time, and strength, and thought, and talent are all spent upon mere amusement, what else are men and women but mere butterflies? "Society" is just a mass of idle people, keeping each other in countenance. O dear hearers, surely we did not come into this world to play away our days! I do not think we came into this world either to slave ourselves to death, or to rust away in laziness. We have come here as a man enters into the porch that he may afterwards enter the house. This life is the doorway to the palace of heaven. Pass through it in such style that you may enter before the King with holy joy. If you give your minds and thoughts to these passing things, be they what they may, you will ruin your souls, for the good seed cannot grow.

III. So I close in the last place by noticing THE RESULT. The seed was unfruitful.

These briers and thorns could not pull the seed up, or throw it away: it remained where it was, but they choked it. So it may be that your business, your cares, your pleasures, have not torn up your religion by the roots—it is there still, such as it is. But these things suffocate your better feelings. A man that is choked is not good for much. If a thief gets into his house, and he desires to defend his property, what can he do while he is choked? He must wait till he gets his breath again. What an amount of choked religion we have around us! It may be alive: I do not know whether it is or not; but it looks very black in the face. God save you from having your religion choked!

I have already told you it was drained of all its sustenance. Look at many Christians; I call them Christians, for they call themselves so. A boy in the streets, selling mince-pies, kept crying, "Hot mince-pies!" A person bought one of them, and found it quite cold. "Boy," said he, "why did you call these pies hot?" "That's the name they go by, sir," said the boy. So there are plenty of people that are called Christians, but they are not Christians—that's the name they

go by; but all the substance is drained out of them by other matters. You see the shape of a Christian, the make of a Christian, and some of the talk of a Christian, but the fruit of a Christian is not there. That is the result of the choking by the thorns of care, riches, pleasure, and worldliness in general.

What life there was in the wheat was very sickly. Let me remind certain persons that their spiritual life is growing weak at this time. Morning prayer this morning, how long did it take? Do not grow red in the face. I will say no more about it. You are not coming out to-night, are you? Half a Sunday is enough worship for you. Would you not like to live in some country place, where you did not need to go out to a place of worship even once? Bible-reading, how much do you do of that? Family prayer, is that a delight to you? Why, numbers of so-called Christians have given up family religion altogether. How about week-day services? You are not often at a prayer-meeting. No, the distance is too great! Thursday night service? "Well, well, you see I might come, but there happens to be a lawn-tennis party that night." Will you come in the winter? "Yes, I would, but then a friend drops in, and we have an evening at bagatelle." How many there are in this condition! I am not going to judge them; but I remember that an eminent minister used to say, "When week-day services are forsaken, farewell to the life of godliness." Such people never seem to bathe in their religion, but they give themselves a wetting with the end of the towel; thus they try to look decent, but they are not inwardly cleansed.

As to confessing Christ before men, many fail altogether. If you were pushed into a corner, and were asked if you were a Christian, you would say, "Well, I do go to a place of worship," but you are by no means anxious to own the soft impeachment. Our Salvation Army friends are not ashamed of their religion; why should you be? Our Quaker friends used to wear broad brims, but they are very properly giving up their peculiar garb: I hope it is not to be to you an indication that you may conceal your religion, and be as much as possible like the world. Do you hope to be soldiers, and yet never wear your regimentals? This is one of the marks of feeble religion.

When it comes to defending the gospel, where do you see it in this age? I hoped that many would be found among Baptists who would care for the truth; but now I come to the conclusion that it is with many, as with the showman, when asked which was Wellington, and which was Buonaparte: "Whichever you please, my little dears. Pay your money, and take your choice!" Free will or free grace, human merit or Christ's atonement, it does not matter now. New theology or old theology, human speculation or divine revelation—who minds? What do they care whether God's truth stands or the devil's lies? I am weary of these drivellers! The thorns have choked the seed in the pulpits and in the churches as well as in private individuals. Oh, that God would return! Oh, that his Spirit would raise up among us men who believe indeed, and prove the power of their belief!

The fruit of much modern piety is *nil*. I sat down one day with three or four old Christian men. We had no sooner met than we began to speak of the providential dealings of God with his people: we

related instances of answers to prayer, and we spoke of the sovereign grace of God, and his faithfulness to his saints. When we had gone a little forward in the conversation, one remarked how he had enjoyed the talk. "Alas!" said he, "nobody talks about God now: his providence and his readiness to hear prayer are seldom mentioned now: the talk is all about the markets, and the weather, and Home Rule, and Mr. Gladstone, and Disestablishment; but little enough about the Lord Jesus Christ." That witness was true. In old times the Lord's people spake often one to another, and the Lord stood at the window and listened:—"The Lord hearkened, and heard it." He liked their talk so well, that he said he would print it—"A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Where do you get experimental Christian talk now? The thorns choke holy communion upon the best things.

Fervent prayer! Mighty prayer! Where do you meet with it? Thank God, we have some brethren here whose prayers could unlock the windows of heaven, or shut them up; but it is not so with many. Go to the prayer-meetings of most of the churches. What poor things! Of course I find in country places that many drop the prayer-meeting during hay-time and harvest. In London they do not drop the prayer-meetings in summer, because they are too small to need dropping: they take up the fragment of a prayer-meeting and mend with it the worn-out lecture, so that it becomes neither lecture nor prayer-meeting. How can we expect a blessing when we are too lazy to ask for it? Is it not evidence of a dying religion when, to cover their carelessness about meeting for prayer, we even hear ministers doubting the value of prayer-meetings, and calling them "religious expedients"?

Where do you meet with intense enjoyment of the things of God? The spiritual life is low when there is little delight in holy service. Oh, for the old Methodistic fire! Oh, to feel our hearts dance at the sound of Jesus' name! Oh, to flame up like beacon fires, and blaze towards heaven with holy ecstasy! It is a sorrowful day when religion goes abroad without wearing her ornaments of joy. When an army has left its flag behind, it has evidently given up all idea of victory.

If there is a declension in spiritual life, we cannot expect to see deeds of holy consecration. Oh, for men and women who bring their alabaster boxes to Jesus! I am glad when I hear this kind of lamentation. "My dear sir, I have not done for the Lord what I ought to have done. I have been a believer now for many years, but I have not given to his cause what I ought to have given; tell me what I can do." There are hopeful signs in such enquiries, and therefore they are well; but it would be better to begin early, and avoid such regrets.

I would put it to you, my dear hearer, have you been fruitful? Have you been fruitful with your wealth? Have you been fruitful with your talent? Have you been fruitful with your time? What are you doing for Jesus now? Salvation is not by doings, you are saved by grace; but if you are so saved, prove it by your devoted lives. Consecrate yourself anew this day wholly to your Master's

service. You are not your own, but bought with a price; and if you would not be like these thorn-choked seeds, live while you live, with all-consuming zeal.

"Well," says one, "but there are the thorns." I know there are: they were here when our blessed Lord came among us, and they made him a cruel crown. Are you going to grow more of them? May I urge you to give up cultivating thorns? They are useless; they come to no good. Whatever the pursuit is, short of the glory of God, it is a thorn, and there is no use in it. It will in the end be painful to you as it was to your Lord. A thorn will tear your flesh, ay, tear your heart. Specially when you come to die will these thorns be in your pillow. Even if you die in the Lord, it will grieve your heart to think you did not live more to Jesus. If you live for these things, you will rue the day, for they are like thorns, painful in the getting, painful in the keeping, and painful in the extraction: you who have had a thorn in your hand know what I mean. Worldly cares come with pain, they stay with pain, and they go with pain.

Still, there is a use for thorns. What is that use? First, if you have thorns about you to-day, make a child's use of them. What does a child do? If he gets a thorn in his finger, he looks at it, and cries. How it smarts! Then he runs off to his mother. That is one of the sweet uses of his adversity, it admits him to his mother at once. She might say, "What are you coming in for? Run about the garden." But he cries, "Please, mother, I've got a thorn in my finger." This is quite enough argument to secure him the best attention of the queen of the house. See how tenderly she takes out the little dagger! Let your cares drive you to God. I shall not mind if you have many of them if each one leads you to prayer. If every fret makes you lean more on the Beloved, it will be a benefit. Thus make good use of the thorns.

Another service to which thorns may be put is to make a hedge of them, to keep the goats of worldly pleasure from eating the young shoots of your graces. Let the sorrows of life keep off temptations which else might do you serious mischief.

May we meet in heaven! Oh, may we all meet in heaven! What a congregation I have addressed this morning! I feel overawed as I look at you. From the ends of the earth have many of you come. The Lord bless you! Strangers are here in vast numbers, for the most of our regular hearers are at the sea-side. I may never see you again on earth. May we all meet in heaven, where thorns will never grow! May we be gathered by the angels in that day when the Lord shall say, "Gather the wheat into my barn"! Amen. So let it be.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matt. xiii. 1—23.

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JESUS KNOWN BY PERSONAL REVELATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 26TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."—Matthew xvi. 13—17.

THIS is one of the earliest places in the New Testament in which we find any mention of the church. Jesus says, in verse eighteen, "I will build my church." It is very significant that our Lord should connect with the church the right idea of himself. In our text we have the test question which must be put to every one who is to be admitted into the assembly of the Lord—"Whom say ye that I am?" The first question to be put to one who would join the church is, "What thinkest thou of Jesus?" You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of him. If you do not begin aright with Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God, you will not go on aright, and your joining of any visible church will be a mistake which will be injurious both to yourself and the church. Beloved, let it be with you first Christ, then the church. There is a certain style of preaching in which *the church* is the leading idea: meaning, to a great extent, by "the church," the priest, as the dispenser of ordinances and the voice of God. But as for us, our chief word is not "church," but "Christ," and not even the church of Christ, but Christ as very God of very God—the Son of the Highest. First Christ, the root, then the church, the outgrowth; first Christ, the builder, then the church, which is his building. The most important question is not, "To which part of the church do you belong?" but, "Do you belong to Christ, who is the Son of the living God?" This must be decided by that other question, "Whom say ye that I am?" If you know Christ, if you rest in Christ, if Christ be to you "the way, the truth, and the life"; above all, if Christ be "formed in you the hope of glory," your connection with the true church, the church of God's election and redemption, is clear and certain.

In putting the question about himself, our Lord made a distinction between two classes of persons, who are named as "men," and as his disciples. He enquired, "Whom do *men* say that I the Son of man am?" These "men" formed their judgment of Christ according to flesh and blood: they went upon the ground of carnal reasoning; or else they followed current opinion. They went upon natural, and not upon spiritual, grounds; they discerned nothing of spiritual things: their judgment was that of flesh and blood.

What conclusion did they arrive at while guided by flesh and blood? The conclusions were *diverse:* "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Error is multiform; truth is one. A thousand lies will live together, and tolerate each other, especially at this time, when errorists are all crying out, "Cast in thy lot with us; let us all have one purse." A thousand false gods will stand together in the Pantheon; but if the ark of the true God enters Dagon's temple, Dagon must come down on his face and be dashed to pieces. Jehovah is God alone, and will not brook a rival. Truth is of necessity intolerant of error. Do not misunderstand me—I believe in the fullest religious liberty, and that conscience owes allegiance to none but God: but I speak of principles: holiness cannot endure sin, righteousness cannot bear injustice, and truth cannot consort with error. "What concord hath Christ with Belial?"

The results to-day of the judgments of men about Christ are very many; but they agree in this, that *they contradict the one and only truth.* To-day, some say, "He is a good man," others say, "Nay; but he deceiveth the people." Some say that he is divine, though not actually God; others that he has become God, though he was not always so; and a third company think him a divine man. Some agree that his teachings were admirable for the occasions on which he delivered them, but that they are somewhat stale in this advanced age; while others ridicule his teachings as altogether impracticable. The doctrines of flesh and blood concerning Jesus are very various.

They were also *contradictory;* for, if Jesus was John the Baptist, he could not be Jeremias. Certain spirits contradicted all the opinions which are registered in our text, for they called the master of the house Beelzebub. The apostles quoted to their Lord the best things that had been said of him; but they hardly liked to foul their mouths with the baser titles. Flesh and blood make many guesses, but they settle upon no one: the enemies of the Lord are at war with each other. In this case, as in others, the false witnesses agree not together.

The judgments of men here recorded are *respectful* to our Lord Jesus. It is usual nowadays to speak very respectfully of him—if there can be any respectfulness in words which deny his Godhead. To-day they rend the seamless vesture of the Crucified. They retain his example, and profess to value it; but his sacrifice they fling aside as a rag of superstition. They dare to deny his miracles while they applaud his precepts: they will have nothing to do with the doctrine of the cross; but with the self-denial of the cross they affect to be enamoured. Our Lord will not thus be divided. Those who take not a whole Christ take not Christ at all.

Whether the conclusions of flesh and blood are respectful to Jesus or not, they are *every one of them wrong*. In the favourable summary here given, not one conjecture of men is correct. Jesus was not John the Baptist, nor Elias, nor Jeremias, nor one of the prophets. Assuredly he was not Beelzebub. Men did not know what Jesus was. They neither knew him, nor his Father. The character of Jesus is much too hard a nut for philosophic teeth to crack. Men wonder at him, and, as the case may be, they admire or abhor him; but who among them can declare his generation, or read the enigma of his person? He is spiritual, and they are carnal; he is holy, and they are "sold under sin." The brightness of his glory blinds them. The pure in heart shall see God; but those who are in love with evil cannot see the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Jesus. They guess, and reason, and blunder. Jesus is to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.

The conclusions of flesh and blood are *unblessed*. No blessing attached to any of the various notions which men hold concerning the Son of man; but that judgment which came by revelation from the Father made Simon Peter blessed, and our Lord beheld and declared the blessing. Gazing at Jesus as if he were John the Baptist, or Elias, brought no blessing with it; and if Jesus be not known by the revelation of the Holy Ghost, he is not known as a well-spring of blessedness to the soul. If you know no more of Christ than the world knows, than the learned know, than the philosophical know, you have not found the blessing. If you know no more of Christ than you have found out for yourselves, even by reading the Word of God, unaided by the Father, you are not blessed. If you know no more of Jesus than flesh and blood has revealed to you, it has brought you no more blessing than the conjectures of their age brought to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who remained an adulterous and unbelieving generation.

There was a handful of people in the world in the Saviour's day who were known as *his disciples*. To them he put the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" They were disciples, that is, *learners;* they were not so much "thoughtful men," as the cant phrase now is, as learners. They received what he imparted to them; his "Verily, verily," being to them better than reasoning. As disciples, they were also *servants*—they learned obedience. They knew Jesus by following in his steps. Put these two things together, learners and servants, and you will see how different they were from the men of the world. "Men" were not learners, for they already knew; they were not obedient, for they followed their own devices, and boasted that they were never in bondage unto any man. The chosen of God received by grace that humble spirit which confesses its ignorance, and is willing to learn; that yielding spirit which lays aside its own will, and is eager to obey its Lord. Judge ye, dear hearers, to which you belong, whether ye are "men," boasting of your intellect, guided by "flesh and blood," or whether ye are "his disciples," who judge after the Spirit, and are taught of the Father. Consider whether the Father has revealed the Son unto you. If you belong to this latter class you are among the blessed. The benediction of the Saviour falls like morning

dew upon your hearts at this time: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

You have now fully before you the subject of our morning's meditation. May the Spirit of God guide us into it!

I. Our first observation is this—THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS DIFFERS FROM THAT OF THE WORLD.

It is more serious, more thoughtful, more personal. Men of the world said, "We do not know who Jesus may be. He is a very remarkable person: he disturbs the quiet of the age, and he is certainly out of his element among us. We do not know who he may be, and we do not particularly care." Herod came to the hasty conclusion that John the Baptist was risen from the dead. Others said, "It is very likely Elijah, who was to appear before the coming of the Messiah." A third party, hearing of his sorrows, thought that he might be Jeremiah *redivivus*. He might be some other prophet, but it did not matter which. The disciples had arrived at their conclusion solemnly, thoughtfully, carefully, each one for himself; and when the Saviour said to them, "Whom say ye that I am?" they would any one of them have spoken, only they had fallen into the habit of making Peter the foreman and mouthpiece of the twelve, and so he spake first, and said very properly and positively, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." To my mind these words have a tone of deep solemnity. Evidently the man means what he says, values the truth he speaks, and attaches deep importance to it. The replies of the world were flippant and frothy; but the answer of the apostles was devout and deliberate, for they judged the subject to be one of the highest importance. Now, beloved, what do you think of Jesus? Is his name a weighty matter with you? Do you see that your view of him is the test of your state? Have you weighed it well? Is he God? Is he the sent and anointed of the Lord? Has he washed you in his blood? Have you taken him to be your all in all? Personally, for yourself, have you done this, and done it with care and deliberation? Will you repeat your choice this morning? Well, then, in this you are what a disciple should be.

In the next place, the disciples' knowledge *is more definite, more clear, more assured.* If you had asked the outsiders about Jesus, they would have said, "Well, perhaps he is John the Baptist, or perhaps he is Jeremias"; but their notions were all in the clouds: they could not make him out. They saw that Jesus was a mysterious person, a holy person, a compassionate person, a wonder-working person; but who he might be they could not make out. But to the disciples Jesus was known, and his personality was distinct. They knew enough to say for certain, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." I will not enlarge upon this, but come to close grips with you. Do you believe in Jesus by an inward discernment of him? Is he to you, clearly and distinctly, the Son of man and the Son of God? Is he to you, definitely, your Saviour, whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation for your sins? Is he your surety, substitute, and sacrifice? Beware of a misty religion! Beware of that which is without form, for it is sure to be void! Beware of that which is undefined

and undefinable, because there is nothing solid in it! Beware of the religion which cries with the poet laureate, "Behold, we know not anything"! This may suit brutes, but will never satisfy men. Let the things visible go. They should go, for they are only a day-dream; but I pray you, as Rutherford says, "tighten your grips" upon eternal things. Realize the Christ, and hold him fast. Make sure work with him. Know what you do know concerning Jesus. Have no second-hand information, no hypothesis, no inference; but say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—not the Son of a mere abstraction, but of Jehovah, who lives, thinks, and acts. A disciple's knowledge, then, differs from the common, windy knowledge of men, in that it is definite, clear, assured.

Thirdly, this knowledge of the disciples was *unanimous*. Outside the circle Jesus was a dozen things; inside the circle he was only one —"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Beloved, men sometimes talk to us of the divisions in the Christian church, and it is a pity there should be even the semblance of a division there; but I am bold to say that there is no real division in the true church of Jesus Christ. Those who are really taught of the Father believe one doctrine concerning Jesus. If I were to lead upon this platform a representative of any one Christian denomination who was spiritually in Christ, his opinion of the Lord Jesus would be the same as mine. A thousand of us would each one say, "He is the Christ, the Son of the living God." Put believers on their knees, where they talk *to* Christ, rather than *of* Christ, and they all say the same thing. Peter was answering his Lord when he made the confession now before us. When we speak to one another we are warped by party forces, but when we speak to our Master we all speak the same language.

> "The saints in prayer appear as one,
> In word, and deed, and mind;
> While with the Father and the Son
> Sweet fellowship they find."

All the spiritual in the world are one. We believe in Jesus Christ as man, as God, as Messiah, as Redeemer, as he by whose merit and precious blood we are saved. We alike glorify Jesus, on whom all our hopes are fixed. Glory be to his name for ever and ever, brethren, we, without exception, join in the general verdict of the church of God—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"!

Furthermore, the true disciples' knowledge of Christ differs from that of men in that *it is permanent*. The verdict of men concerning Jesus is changeable as the wind. In one age Jesus was hounded down as the Nazarene, the blasphemer. By-and-by men would set up his statue in the Pantheon among the gods. In one age, his teachings were held to be deeply philosophical, and the gnostics began to mystify them at a great rate: at another period they were denounced as visionary, or ridiculed as absurd. Christ is sometimes up in the market, and sometimes down in the market; but, mark you, he is not in the market at all. He can neither be bought nor sold. They say well of him one day, they speak ill of him another day: what matters it what they say? He needs no honour from them, and he fears not

their dishonour. Unless they will believe in him as Lord and Saviour, it is of no importance what they think of him. Till they submit to him as their Prophet, Priest, and King, their thoughts of him are vain. As dogs do bay the moon, and yet the moon shines on, so do men howl at Jesus, or cringe at his feet; but he shines on in steadfast light. True believers have always the same idea of Christ. They grow in the extent of their knowledge, they grow in the depth of their convictions; but when they begin with him he is the Son of the living God to them, and when they know him best he is still both Christ and God. In every country and in every age, during every phase of the world's fickle thought, the disciples of Jesus hold fast by his Messiahship and Godhead, and on this rock they build their hopes.

The belief of disciples differs from the notions of "men," in that *it is more glorifying to Jesus.* Men make him John the Baptist; but that earnest man was not worthy to unloose the latchets of his shoes. They make him Elias, the prophet of fire, as if he would call fire from heaven upon men to destroy them. Whatever they judge Jesus to be, they do not agree to sing with the virgin, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." As for me, my tongue can never speak a thousandth part of the praises my heart adjudges to him, and, alas, my heart does not worship him a thousandth part as much as he deserves. When I have striven with all my might to extol him in my discourse, I feel ready to bite my tongue for being so slow and slack. I go home, saying to myself, "A pretty herald of thy King art thou! Thou didst conceal his excellence instead of commending it to the eyes of men." Brethren, "words are but air, and tongues but clay," and our Master's glories are too great to be set forth by such poor means. Oh, that we knew how to extol him! Away, ye men of the world, with your comparison of him to this or that mortal; ye are blind as bats! As well might ye compare the sun to glow-worms. Come, angels and archangels, and help us with your burning words! Nay, even you must fail. Jesus is infinite, incomparable. The brightness of the Father's glory is not to be set forth by our words.

Once more, the knowledge which disciples have of Christ differs from that of the world, in that *it is more influential.* The world is not influenced by believing on Jesus as John the Baptist; but we are greatly influenced by believing that he is the Son of God. This takes possession of our heart, our head, our eye, our hand, our foot, our body, our soul, and our spirit. This Son of God is Lord over us. He sits supreme upon the throne of our hearts, and our lives show that he rules and governs our thoughts. Is it not so? This is no inert opinion, but a living, active principle. I leave these things with you that you may search yourselves, and see whether you belong to the mass outside, guessing and blundering; or whether you are of the inner circle, who are taught of the Father, and therefore know the Son.

II. Secondly, and this is a very important point: THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST POSSESSED BY TRUE DISCIPLES IS RECEIVED IN A SPECIAL WAY. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee."

Beloved, if we know the Saviour aright, we have not learned it alone by the instruction of other men. Peter had heard others speak, but he did not know Jesus as the Christ till the Father revealed him. Paul tells us concerning the gospel, that he neither received it of man, neither was he taught it, but he received it by the revelation of Jesus Christ. I grant you that God uses men to instruct us; but all the prophets and apostles could not teach us Christ if the Father did not reveal his Son in us personally. Holy men are the pens, but God himself must write with them, or they will write nothing on our hearts. God must reveal Jesus to us, or we shall never see him, however faithful the minister may be.

Nor had Peter found out the nature and glory of the Lord Jesus by his own reasonings. These were the flesh and blood by which Jesus is never made out. No doubt, as he read the Old Testament, he said—"This prophecy and that are fulfilled in Jesus"; but, even that would not have sufficed to make Jesus known to him as Christ and God. The Father, who sent Jesus to us, must also make Jesus known to each one of us, or we shall remain in ignorance of him. Man cannot by searching find out God, nay, not even God in Christ Jesus. Peter came to the conclusion that Jesus was the Son of the living God, because the Father in heaven made him to see and know that it must be so.

We do not even discover Christ merely by reading the letter of the Word of God. God teaches us saving truth through Holy Scripture, and by our devout meditation thereon; but these operate not of themselves effectually, but only as he is at the back of them. You might go on hearing, reading, and thinking, and yet never discern the Lord's Christ. The true disciple's knowledge of Christ cometh not through flesh and blood, but by revelation of the Spirit, who is sent of the Father.

Can you follow me experimentally in this? Has the Father revealed Christ to you *by a birth in you?* You can never know the Father till you become a son; you can never know the Son till you are yourself a son. A spiritual faculty must be created in us, by which we are enabled to perceive the Son of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and nothing more, and flesh cannot discern spiritual things. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and spirit alone can enter into the spiritual world, and understand spiritual things. "Ye must be born again." You must be begotten again of the Father; otherwise Jesus Christ will be as little known to you as the light of the sun is known to dead men.

Moreover, *the Father must also purify us.* As we have already heard, "the pure in heart shall see God." It is only when the Father by the Holy Spirit purifies the mental eye, by cleansing the heart and life, that we are able to understand and perceive the true nature, work, and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ. Regeneration must be followed up by sanctification if we would obtain edification in the things of Christ. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord": he may have the Lord set before him, but he cannot see him without holiness; he may hear about Jesus, he may read about Jesus, but he cannot see him as Christ and God unless his nature is sanctified.

There must be a character given corresponding in a measure to that of Christ before we can perceive Christ. Do not misunderstand me; you can believe Christ to be divine, you can believe him to be sent of God; you can believe all this as a matter of orthodoxy, and be lost to-day, and lost for ever: but to know Jesus as the Christ, to know him so that you are acquainted with him even as you are acquainted with a friend, must be given you of the Spirit of God or you will never attain it. Flesh and blood cannot reveal this to you.

Let me refresh the memories of God's people. Have there not been times with you when the Son of God has been revealed in you with power? Certain of these occasions have happened when you were in trouble: you found no rest till you thought of Jesus, your Lord and God, and then your peace was like a river. The storm raged till you saw Jesus walking on the waves, and bidding them be still; and then you said, "Truly this is the Son of God." Remember when you were burdened with sin—you can never forget *that!* You were crushed to the earth under your load of guilt, and Jesus was revealed as the Sin-bearer, and as you kissed his pierced feet, and he spoke pardon to you, you knew that he was God. Had he not said of old, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else"? At times my heart has been so full of joy that I could hardly have endured more. Jesus has been heaven within my heart. In standing alone, contending for the faith, I have enjoyed a sweet content in the sole fellowship of my Lord. In his presence, anxieties and fears have fled away, and questions have been solved once for all in a peaceful sense of infinite love. Son of the Highest, thou art revealed to me in thine own light, and I am glad! This revelation of Christ must be given to each one of you, or else you will miss the blessedness to which Simon Peter had attained. I am obliged to be brief where I should like to enlarge; but time will not tarry, even when we are spending it best. May you enjoy a personal revelation in your souls by which the divine revelation in this Book shall be made your own for ever.

III. Thirdly, THIS KNOWLEDGE HAS ITS OWN PECULIAR MARKS! It comes not by flesh and blood, but by the teaching of the Father, and it has characteristics all its own.

First, it has this mark—*it comes with an infallible certainty to the heart.* If you read of Jesus in books, or hear of him from ministers, it is well; but if the Father reveals him to you, it is infinitely better; for then no shadow of suspicion rests upon the testimony. The witness of God cannot be questioned. Men must not wonder that we grow indignant when the glorious truths concerning our Lord are questioned; for to our hearts they are not in the region of things to be disputed. There is constructive blasphemy in discussing those facts concerning the Son of God which the Father has revealed to us. When such questions do cross our minds, they are exceedingly painful to us, and we chase them out as thieves which defile the temple of the Lord; but when the Father is revealing Jesus as the Christ, the intruders do not come near; they could not. There is no doubting when the Father is witnessing to the heart. Doubts cannot come: as fire amongst stubble burns up the dry straw, so does the Father's witness consume

questioning. "Oh," saith one, "but the Father has never spoken to me in that way." I am sorry for you. Ask him to do so. I am glad that you confess your want of such an experience; but it is a very serious want. The Lord must deal with you: his Spirit must come into contact with your spirit: there must be an inward illumination by the Holy Ghost, or else you will never be truly blessed. It was not only what Peter knew, but the way in which he came to know it, which made Peter blessed. Truth thus revealed comes with a force far transcending the arguments of pure reason. Notwithstanding the precision of mathematical demonstrations, I venture to assert that what the Holy Ghost writes on the soul is even more sure to him who receives it. The demonstration of the Spirit is the most certain of demonstrations. To the illuminated mind the witness of the Father is absolute certainty. Oh for more of it!

In the next place, this knowledge has this peculiar mark; that *it is attended with sacred operations.* When the Father reveals Christ to a man, he at the same time reveals the man to himself. This discovery of the sin and ruin of self leads on to humiliation, contrition, repentance, and renewal. The man is moved to desire holiness, to long to be like Jesus; and this is a blessed fruit of knowing Jesus. All manner of holy and blessed work goes on in the heart at the time when Jesus becomes known: faith, hope, love, patience, zeal, and joy in the Holy Ghost come with a discovery of the glories of Jesus. He is that living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever, and from him there groweth up in the soul all those holy fruits which are well pleasing unto God. If thou hast Christ, thou hast the new birth, thou hast the heavenly life, thou hast holy aspirations, and thou art on the way to the attainment of perfection.

There also comes with this revelation *a remarkable restfulness.* The mind before flitted about like a bat at eventide; but now it rests like the dove when she was clasped in Noah's hands, and taken into the ark. Get a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in thy soul from the Father's self, and "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep thy heart and mind." I cannot describe that peace; indeed, I can describe nothing; but must leave you to feel it for yourselves. We read in the gospels that, after our Lord had spoken to the winds and waves, "there was a great calm." It was not only "a calm," but "a great calm." Did you ever feel that profound serenity, that unbroken rest? Even desire, at such a time, seems to sleep. You could not wish for more. You remember nothing grievous, and you foresee nothing alarming. You have all things in Christ Jesus your Lord; and you feel like singing all the time. This is one of the marks of the revelation of Christ in the soul: it brings an inward repose which is the pledge and earnest of the heavenly rest.

There is this one more mark about it, that this conviction of the Godhead and glory of Christ *abides for ever.* The man who has obtained his religion from other people may have it taken away by other people; but he who has received it from the Father, holds it by a tenure which cannot be broken. That which we have learned from the Father will never be unlearned. Nothing can erase what the Holy Spirit has engraved. Beloved, I beseech you beware of a home-made

religion, cobbled on your own lapstone. Equally, beware of a religion which is a sort of patchwork, made up by the kind contributions of Christian friends; and none of it your own. Beware of that oil which you borrow: you must go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. No man among you can drink from my pitcher, you must go to the well-head, each one for himself. Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, *let him come unto me*, and drink." There is no safe religion in the world but that which comes through a personal application to Jesus, and a reception of him for yourself. In this matter, God himself must reveal Jesus to you; for he himself says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." The Spirit must take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us, or we shall never receive them. Every one that hath been taught of the Father comes to Jesus, and comes to Jesus to remain: all short of that is temporary and delusive. Get the better part by sitting at the feet of Jesus, and it will never be taken from you; but religion which does not come by a personal revelation is a mere mirage—there is no reality about it, and it will disappear like a dream of the night.

IV. Lastly, THIS KNOWLEDGE SECURES PECULIAR PRIVILEGES TO ITS POSSESSOR. What saith the Lord Jesus? "Blessed art thou, Simon, Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." How was he blessed?

Simon Peter was blessed, first, because *he had eternal life*. How do we know? Our Saviour said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." "This *is* life eternal": if you know Jesus as sent of God, you have eternal life. The knowledge of him is life eternal. You read about Julius Cæsar, Mark Antony, and the like; but you certainly do not know them. You cannot know them. You know about them in proportion to your scholarship, but you do not know them as living persons, or as sent of God to you. They are dead and gone long ago, and to you they never had an existence or a mission. At this hour you know something about the President of the United States; but you do not know *him*. With regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, you not only know a great deal about him, but I trust you know HIM. Do you know Jesus himself? Have you ever spoken to him? Has he ever spoken to you? Have you ever leaned your head on his bosom? Do you know his heart? Does he know your heart by your having told your heart to him? Is he a friend, an acquaintance, a brother to you? This is life eternal. This kind of knowledge is revealed to us by the Father. Flesh and blood cannot make us friends of Christ. The apostles knew Christ after the flesh, yet this was not the cause of their blessedness, but the Father gave them a revelation which brought eternal life with it.

Again, Peter was blessed because *this knowledge was an evidence that he was a peculiarly favoured man*. What a question is that, "Lord how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" The world does not know Christ, it cannot know him. It is to his chosen that he reveals himself: the rest believe not, and therefore see him not. To his chosen he cometh and speaketh with them as friend with friend. He takes them apart and looks into their hearts, and

hearkens to their sorrows; and in return opens his heart, and says to each one of them, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." What a favour to be so instructed of the Father as to know the Son! If thou knowest Christ, the Father foreknew thee. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." If thou knowest Christ, thy name is written in the Lamb's book of life, thou art in the family register of heaven, and thou shalt, by-and-by, be with him where he is. Well did the Saviour say, "Blessed art thou."

He that knows Christ is in a favoured position wherever he is. In every condition he is blessed. You are very ill—you are blessed in being ill. You are prospering in the world—if you know Christ, your prosperity is blessed. Do you lament that you are going down in the world? Mourn not, for your adversity is blessed. You are very simple-minded, and have not much education. Never mind, you are blessed if you know Christ; his knowledge is the most excellent of the sciences. Are you well-instructed? Rejoice not in all knowledge, but glory in this one thing, that thou knowest Jesus, and art blessed. Does the world curse thee? Fret not. Does the devil snuff at thee? Tremble not, but resist him. Jesus says thou art blessed, and I wot that he whom Christ blesses is blessed, and none shall reverse the word.

I close, desiring that every man among you may know this blessedness to the full. If you do know it, *it will qualify you for honourable service.* Peter was the man who knew and confessed the Lord's Christ as the Son of the living God, and he was not only blessed himself, but he was chosen to be one of the first stones of the church whose foundation-courses were then being laid. Peter was described by his Lord as a piece of rock, and on that rock would the Lord build his church. Peter was to have the keys, because in his faith in the Saviour God he already possessed the key of all gospel truth. Having received the word by a revelation from the Father, he became a fit person to be built into the church at its first founding. He who clings to Christ for himself is the man to help others. Unless thou dost first of all know Christ by the distinct revealing of God, what canst thou do? So thou wouldst run, wouldst thou? Wait till thou art sent! And thou art not sent thyself if thou dost not know Jesus Christ whom God hath sent. So thou wouldst deliver a message, wouldst thou? Wait till thou knowest it! And thou dost not know it unless thou hast a personal knowledge of Christ as God's Messiah, and as the Son of God. I may be speaking to some young brother who thinks about preaching, or to some sister who looks forward to teaching in the Sunday-school: do not set up to teach what you do not know. If you have never been taught of the Father, wait till you have been. Pray that you may now be taught of the Lord. He that would teach a trade, but has never practised it, will make a fool of himself; and he that would go and tell of a Christ he has never known is foolish even to think of it.

Go home, and pray the Father to reveal his Son Jesus Christ to thee. Then, when thou goest out to speak, thou wilt speak with confidence. Men, perhaps, will say, "He is very dogmatic." But a brave confession is much needed nowadays. You must be sure of

something, or you will teach nothing worth learning. A man must have a fulcrum, or fixed point, or his lever is useless: if everything is uncertain to you, one thing alone is certain, namely, that you had better let the matter alone till you have found out something certain. If you have no foundation for yourself, you cannot build up others. Therefore, do, first and foremost, cry to God, "Lord, reveal thy Son in me!" It is a prayer I would have you all put up: "O Lord God, the giver of Christ, shine into my heart, that I may see thine unspeakable gift! By thy Holy Spirit enable me to know who and what Jesus is, that I may accept him as thou hast proposed him to me. Thou didst give him out of thy bosom, give him into mine. Enable me to speak of him, as of one whose glory I have beheld, whose power I have felt."

Do not suppose, my hearers, that you will find out the Lord Christ by your own wit and wisdom. Young man, do not say, "I will be a student, I will by my own ability discover this Son of man." Remember that Jesus can only be seen by his own light. Only Godhead can teach us Godhead. Christ is a book in which no man can read except Christ himself shall spell the words to him. Jesus is his own interpreter. He is the door, but he is also the key. He is to be seen, but he supplies the light in which he is to be seen. Jesus came forth from God, and the power to know Jesus also comes forth from God, so that all comes from God; and unto God let us return it, adoring Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—257, 493, 797.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2ND, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."—Titus iii. 3—8.

LAST Thursday evening my sermon was based upon the contrast, in the second chapter of Ephesians, between the expressions "not of works" and "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." I tried to show the true place of good works in connection with salvation. Many of you were not present then, and I felt that the subject was of such extreme importance that I must return to the same line of thought in this greater congregation. I shall endeavour by another text, which contains the same contrast, to set before you the usefulness, the benefit, yea, and the absolute necessity for our abounding in good works, if indeed we are saved by faith in Christ Jesus.

Let us come at once to our text. Our apostle tells us that we are to speak evil of no man, but to show meekness unto all men; and he adds this as an all-sufficient reason—we ourselves also were sometimes like the very worst of them. When we look upon the world at this day, it pains us by its folly, disobedience, and delusion. He that knows most of this modern Babylon, whether he observes the richer or the poorer classes of society, will find the deepest cause for grief. But we cannot condemn with bitterness, for such were some of us. Not only can we not condemn with bitterness, but we look upon our sinful fellow-creatures with great compassion, for such were some of us. Yea more, we feel encouraged to hope for ungodly men, even for the foolish and disobedient, for we ourselves also were, not long ago, like them. We feel that we must give the thought of our heart and the energy of our lives to the great work of saving men, out of gratitude to the Lord our God, who, in his kindness and love, has saved us. "I am a man," said one, "and everything that has to do with

men concerns me": but the child of God adds to this, "I am also a sinful man, and owe my cleansing to the loving favour of the Lord. I was in the same mire of sin as these are in; and if I am now washed in the laver of regeneration, and renewed by the Holy Ghost, I owe it all to sovereign grace, and am bound by love to man and love to God to seek the cleansing and renewal of my fellow-men." Eyes that have wept over our own sin will always be most ready to weep over the sins of others. If you have judged yourselves with candour, you will not judge others with severity. You will be more ready to pity than to condemn, more anxious to hide a multitude of sins than to punish a single sinner. I will give little for your supposed regeneration if there is not created in you a tender heart, which can truly say—

> "My God, I feel the mournful scene;
> My bowels yearn o'er dying men;
> And fain my pity would reclaim,
> And snatch the firebrands from the flame."

With this feeling towards mankind at large, we are led to consider the divine remedy for sinfulness, and to look with pleasure upon what God has devised for the creation of holiness in a fallen race. He at first created man a pure and spotless being. When he placed Adam in the garden, he made a friend of him; and though Adam has fallen, and all his race are depraved, God is still aiming at the same thing, namely, to create holy beings, purified unto himself, to be a peculiar people, zealous for good works. What has the Lord done? What is he still doing to this end? How far have we participated in those processes of grace which work towards this glorious design?

I ask your attention this morning while I speak, first, *of what we were;* and here let the tears stand in your eyes: secondly, *of what has been done for us;* and here let grace move in your hearts: and, thirdly, *of what we wish to do;* and here let care be seen in your lives.

I. First, beloved, let us think for a few minutes only OF WHAT WE ONCE WERE. Think, I say, with tears of repentance in our eyes. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." The apostle does not say, "*Ye* yourselves," as if he spoke to Titus and the believing Cretians, but *we* ourselves, thus including himself. Beloved apostle, thou dost humbly present to us this bitter cup of confession, drinking of it thyself with us, and putting thyself on a level with us—"We ourselves also." Come, then, pastor, elders, deacons, and members of the church, you that have served your Lord for many years, hesitate not to join in this humiliating confession.

A threefold set of evils is here described. The first set consists of *the evils of the mind:* "We were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived." We were *foolish.* We thought we knew, and therefore we did not learn. We said, "We see," and therefore we were blind, and would not come to Jesus for sight. We thought we knew better than God; for our foolish heart was darkened, and we imagined ourselves to be better judges of what was good for us than the Lord our God. We refused heavenly warnings because we dreamed that sin

was pleasant and profitable. We rejected divine truth because we did not care to be taught, and disdained the lowly position of a disciple sitting at Jesus' feet. Our pride proved our folly. What lying things we tried to believe! We put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; darkness for light, and light for darkness. In thought, desire, language, and action "we were sometimes foolish." Some of us were manifestly foolish, for we rushed headlong into sins which injured us, and have left that in our bones which years have not been sufficient to remove. Every lover of vice is a fool writ large. O my brother, I suppose you have no photograph of yourself as you used to be; but if you have, take it down, and study it, and bless God that he has made you to differ so greatly from your former self!

In addition to being foolish, we are said to have been *disobedient;* and so we were, for we forsook the commands of God. We wanted our own will and way. We said, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice?" There is a touch of Pharaoh about every one of us. Obedience is distasteful to the obstinate; and we were such. "I knew," said God, "that thou wast very obstinate, and hadst an iron sinew." Our necks by nature refuse to bow to the yoke of our Creator. We would, if we could, be the lords of providence, for we are not content with the divine allotment. We wish that we were the legislators of the universe, that we might give license to our own lusts, and no longer be hampered with restrictions. To the holy law of God we were disobedient. Ah, how long some of us were disobedient to the gospel! We heard it as though we heard it not; or when it did touch the heart, we did not allow its influence to remain. Like water, which retains no mark of a blow, so did we obliterate the effect of truth. We were determined not to be obedient to the faith of the Lord Jesus. We were unwilling to yield God his due place either in providence, law, or gospel.

Paul adds that we were *deceived*, or led astray. As sheep follow one another, and go away from the pasture, so did we follow some chosen companion, and would not follow the good Shepherd. We were deceived. Perhaps we were deceived in our thoughts, and made to believe a lie; certainly we were deceived in our idea of happiness; we hoped to find it where it does not exist, we searched for the living among the dead. We were the dupes of custom and of company. We were here, there, and everywhere in our actions: no more to be relied upon than lost sheep.

Children of God, remember these errors of your minds, lay them upon your consciences, and let your souls plead guilty to them; for I feel assured that we have all, in some measure, been in this triple condition—foolish, disobedient, deceived.

The next bundle of mischief is found in *the evils of our pursuits.* The apostle says we were "serving divers lusts and pleasures." The word for "serving" means being under servitude. We were once the slaves of divers lusts and pleasures. By *lusts* we understand desires, longings, ambitions, passions. Many are these masters, and they are all tyrants. Some are ruled by greed for money; others crave for fame; some are enslaved by lust for power; others by the lust of the eye; and many by the lusts of the flesh. We were born slaves, and we live slaves

until the great Liberator emancipates us. No man can be in worse bondage than to be enslaved by his own evil desires.

We were also the bond-slaves of *pleasure*. Alas! alas! that we were so far infatuated as to call it pleasure! Looking back at our former lives, we may well be amazed that we could once take pleasure in things whereof we are now ashamed. The Lord has taken the very name of our former idols out of our mouths. Some who are now saints were once the slaves of drunkenness, or of "chambering and wantonness." Some were given up to evil company and rioting, or to pride and self-seeking. Many are the evils which array themselves in the silken robes of pleasure, that they may tempt the hungry heart of man. Once we took pleasure in those sins which are now our misery as we look back on them. O my brethren, we dare not deny our base original! To-day we drink from the well of holiness undefiled pleasures which delight our souls; but we blush as we remember that aforetime yonder foul and putrid pools seemed sweet to our vitiated taste. Like Nebuchadnezzar in the failure of his mind, we fed among beasts in the madness of our sin. Unlike the Egyptians, who loathed to drink of the river when God had smitten it with his curse, we took all the more delight in draughts of unhallowed pleasure because it yielded a fearful intoxication to know that we were daring to defy a law.

Do not let me talk about these things this morning while you listen to me without feeling. I want you to be turning over the pages of your old life, and joining with Paul and the rest of us in our sad confession of former pleasure in evil. A holy man was wont to carry with him a book which had three leaves in it, but never a word. The first leaf was black, and this showed his sin; the second was red, and this reminded him of the way of cleansing by blood; while the third was white, to show how clean the Lord can make us. I beg you just now to study that first black page. It is all black; and as you look at it, it shows blacker and blacker. What seemed at one time to be a little white darkens down as it is gazed upon, till it wears the deepest shade of all. Ye were sometimes erring in your minds and in your pursuits. Is not this enough to bring the water into your eyes, O ye that now follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth?

The apostle then mentions *the evils of our hearts*. Here you must discriminate, and judge, each one for himself, how far the accusation lies. He speaks of "living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." That is to say, first, we harboured *anger* against those who had done us evil; and, secondly, we lived in envy of those who appeared to have more good than we had ourselves. The first sin is very common: many abide year after year in the poisonous atmosphere of an angry spirit. All are not alike in this, for some are naturally easy and placable; but in all of us there is that proud spirit which resents injuries, and would revenge them. Men may sin against God, and we are not indignant; but if they sin against us, we are very angry. To the spirit of Christ it is natural and even delightful to forgive: but such is not the spirit of the world. I have heard of men who would not forgive their own children, and of brothers who were implacable towards each other. This is the spirit of the devil. Revenge is the delight of the

wicked, but to do kindness in return for injury is the luxury of a Christian. One main distinction between the heirs of God and the heirs of wrath is this: the unregenerate are in the power of self, and so of hate, but the regenerate are under the dominion of Christ, and so of love. Thou mayest judge thyself by this, whether thy prevailing spirit is that of wrath or of love: if thou art given to anger, thou art a child of wrath; and if thou art full of love, thou art a child of God, whose name is *love*. God help us to stamp out the last spark of personal animosity! Let us remove the memories of injury, as the incoming tide washes out the marks on the sand. If any of you have disputes in your family, end them at once, cost what it may. How can you love God whom you have not seen if you do not love your brother whom you have seen? Grace makes a great change in this respect in those who by nature are malicious.

The other form of evil is *envy* of those who seem to have more of good than we have. Frequently envy attacks men because of their wealth. How dare they have luxuries when we are poor? At other times envy spits its venom against a man's good repute, when he happens to be more praised than we are. How can any man venture to be better thought of than we are? Truly this is the spirit of the devil, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience. The child of God is delivered from envy by the grace of God; and if it ever does arise, he hates himself for admitting it. He would wish to see others happy, even if he were unhappy himself. If he be in the depths of poverty, he is glad that everybody is not so pinched as he is. If he has received unjust censure, he is willing to hope that there was some mistake; and he is glad that everybody is not quite so unfairly dealt with. He rejoices in the praise of others, and triumphs in their success. What! do you wince at this, and feel that you have not reached so far? May grace enable you to get into this spirit, for it is the spirit of Jesus!

Beloved, sin takes different shapes in different people, but it is in us all. This darkness once beclouded those who to-day shine like stars among the godly. Sin is often restrained by circumstances, and yet it is in the heart. We ought not to take credit to ourselves because of our freedom from evils into which we had no chance of falling. We have not been so bad as others because we could not be. A certain boy has run away from home. Another boy remained at home. Is he, therefore, a better child? Listen! he had broken his leg, and could not get out of bed. That takes away all the credit of his staying at home. Some men cannot sin in a certain direction, and then they say to themselves, "What excellent fellows we are to abstain from this wickedness!" Sirs, you would have done it if you could, and therefore your self-praise is mere flattery. Had you been placed in the same position as others, you would have acted as others have done, for your heart goes after the same idols. Sin in the heart of every man defiles everything that he does. Even if an ungodly man should do what in itself might be a good action, there is a defilement in his motive which taints it all. You cannot draw pure water from a foul well. As is the heart, such is the life. Listen to this, ye that have never passed under the processes of divine grace. See what you are,

and where you are, if left to yourselves, and cry to the Lord to save you.

II. Now for a more cheerful topic. We are now to think OF WHAT HAS BEEN DONE FOR US; and here let us feel the movements of grace in our hearts. What has been done for us?

First, *there was a divine interposition.* "The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared." Man was in the dark, plunging onward to blacker midnight every step he took. I do not find, as I read history, any excuse for the modern notion that men are longing for God, and labouring to find him. No, the sheep were never seeking the Shepherd, but all were going astray. Men everywhere turn their backs to the light, and try to forget what has been handed down by their forefathers: they are everywhere feeling after a great lie which they may raise to the throne of God. We do not by nature long after God, nor sigh for his holiness. The gracious Lord came in uncalled for and unsought, and in the bounty of his heart, and in the great love of his nature, he determined to save man. Methinks I hear him say, "How shall I give thee up?" He sees mankind resolved to perish unless an almighty arm shall intervene; and he interposes in fulness of pity and power. You know how, in many ways, the Lord has intervened on our behalf; but, especially, you remember how he came down from heaven, took our nature, lived among us, mourned our sin, and bore it in his own body on the tree. You know how the Son of God interposed in that grand *Avatar*, that marvellous incarnation in which the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. Then broke he what would else have been an everlasting darkness; then snapped he the chain which must have fettered our humanity throughout all the ages. The love and kindness of God our Saviour, which had always existed, at length "appeared" when God, in the person of his Son, came hither, met our iniquities hand to hand, and overcame their terrible power, that we also might overcome.

Note well that *there was a divine salvation.* In consequence of the interposition of Jesus, believers are described as being saved: "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Hearken to this. There are men in the world who are saved: they are spoken of, not as "to be saved," not as to be saved when they come to die, but saved even now—saved from the dominion of the evils which we described under our first head: saved from folly, disobedience, delusion, and the like. Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin, is saved from the guilt and power of sin. He shall no longer be the slave of his lusts and pleasures; he is saved from that dread bondage. He is saved from hate, for he has tasted love, and learned to love. He shall not be condemned for all that he has hitherto done, for his great Substitute and Saviour has borne away the guilt, the curse, the punishment of sin; yea, and sin itself. O my hearer, if thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ this morning, thou art saved! As surely as once thou wast lost, being led astray, so surely art thou now saved, if thou art a believer, being found by the great Shepherd, and brought back again upon his shoulders. I beg you to get hold of this truth, that according to his mercy the Lord

has saved us who believe in Jesus. Will you tell me, or rather tell yourselves, whether you are saved or not? If you are not saved, you are lost; if you are not already forgiven, you are already condemned. You are in the ruin of fallen nature, unless you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. You are a slave to sin, unless your liberty has been procured by the great ransom. Examine yourselves on these points, and follow me in the next thought.

There was a motive for this salvation. Positively, "According to his mercy he saved us"; and negatively, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done." Brethren, we could not have been saved at the first by our works of righteousness; for we had not done any. "No," says the apostle, "we were foolish, disobedient, deceived," and therefore we had no works of righteousness, and yet the Lord interposed and saved us. Behold and admire the splendour of his love, that "He loved us even when we were dead in sins." He loved us, and therefore quickened us. God does not come to men to help them when they are saving themselves; but he comes to the rescue when they are damning themselves. When the heart is full of folly and disobedience, the good God visits it with his favour. He comes, not according to the hopefulness of our character, but according to his mercy; and mercy has no eye except for guilt and misery. The grace of God is not even given according to any good thing that we have done since our conversion: the expression before us shuts out all real works of righteousness which we have done since regeneration, as all supposed ones before it. The Lord assuredly foreknew these works, but he also foreknew our sins. He did not save us according to the foreknowledge of our good works, because these works are a part of the salvation which he gave us. As well say that a physician healed a sick man, because he foreknew that he would be better; or that you give a beggar an alms, because you foresee that he would have the alms. Works of righteousness are the fruit of salvation, and the root must come before the fruit. The Lord saves his people out of clear, unmixed, undiluted mercy and grace, and for no other reason. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Oh, how splendidly is the grace of God seen in the whole plan of salvation! How clearly is it seen in our cases, for "we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived," yet he saved us, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy"! Will not some self-convicted sinner find comfort here? O despairing one, does not a little hope come in by this window? Do you not see that God can save you on the ground of mercy? He can wash you and renew you according to the sovereignty of his grace. On the footing of merit you are hopelessly lost, but on the ground of mercy there is hope.

Observe, next, that *there was a power by which we were saved.* "He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." The way in which we are delivered from the dominion of sin is by the work of the Holy Ghost. This adorable Person is very

God of very God. This divine Being comes to us, and causes us to be born again. By his eternal power and Godhead, he gives us a totally new nature, a life which could not grow out of our former life, nor be developed from our nature—a life which is a new creation of God. We are saved, not by evolution, but by creation. The Spirit of God creates us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. We experience regeneration, which means—being generated over again, or born again. Remember the result of this as set forth in covenant terms—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." This great process is carried out by the Holy Ghost.

After we are regenerated, he continues to renew us; our thoughts, feelings, desires, and acts are constantly renewed. Regeneration as the commencement of the new creation can never come twice to any man, but renewal of the Holy Ghost is constantly and perpetually repeated. The life once given is revived: the light once kindled is fed with holy oil, which is poured upon it continually. The new-born life is deepened and increased in force by that same Holy Spirit who first of all created it. See then, dear hearers, that the only way to holiness is to be made anew, and to be kept anew. The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost are both essential. The name of Jesus has been engraved in us, even on our hearts, but it needs to be cut deeper and deeper, lest the letters be covered up by the moss of routine, or filled up by the bespatterings of sin. We are saved "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost"—one process in different stages. This is what our God has done for us: blessed be his name! Being washed and renewed we are saved.

There is also mentioned a blessed privilege which comes to us by Jesus Christ. The Spirit is shed on us abundantly by Jesus Christ, and we are "justified by his grace." Both justification and sanctification come to us through the medium of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is shed on us abundantly "through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Beloved, never forget that regeneration is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, but comes to us by Jesus Christ. We do not receive any blessing apart from our Lord Jesus. In all works of the Spirit, whether regeneration or renewal, it is the Lord Jesus who is putting forth his power, for he saith, "Behold, I make all things new." The Mediator is the conduit-pipe through which grace supplies us day by day with the water of life. Everything is by Jesus Christ. Without him was not anything made that was made, either in grace or in nature. We must not think it possible for us to receive anything from God apart from the appointed Mediator. But, oh, think of it! —in Jesus Christ we are to-day abundantly anointed by the Holy Spirit; the sacred oil is shed upon us abundantly from him who is our Head. We are sweet to God through the divine perfume of the Holy Spirit who comes to us by Jesus Christ. This day we are just in the sight of God in Christ's righteousness, through which we are "justified by grace." Jehovah sees no sin for which he must punish us; he has said, "Take away his filthy garments from him, and set a fair mitre upon his head"; and this is done. We are accepted in the Beloved.

Since Jesus has washed our feet, we are "clean every whit"—clean in the double sense of being washed with water and with blood, and so cleansed from the power and guilt of sin. What a high privilege is this! Can we ever sufficiently praise God for it?

Once more, *there comes out of this a divine result.* We become to-day joint-heirs with Christ Jesus, and so heirs of a heavenly estate; and then out of this heirship there grows a hope which reaches forward to the eternal future with exceeding joy. We are "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Think of that! What a space there is between "foolish, disobedient, deceived"—right up to "heirs according to the hope of eternal life"! Who thought of bridging this great gulf? Who but God? With what power did he bridge it? How, but by the divine power and Godhead of the Holy Ghost? Where was the bridge found by which the chasm could be crossed? The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us, has made a way over the once impassable deep.

I have thus very briefly set before you an outline of the work of grace within the human heart. Do you understand it? Have you ever felt it? Do you feel the life of regeneration pulsing within you this morning? Will you not bless God for it?

> "We raise our Father's name on high,
> Who his own Spirit sends
> To bring rebellious strangers nigh,
> And turn his foes to friends."

III. We will now speak OF WHAT WE WISH TO DO; and here let us show care in our lives. Mark well these words, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

"Be careful to maintain good works." This precept is *full in its meaning.* In another Scripture you are told to be careful for nothing, but here you are bidden to be careful to maintain good works. We read, "casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you": but do not cast off your care to maintain good works. You have a number of cares about you; slip a bridle over their heads, and train them to plough in the field of good works. Do not let care be wasted over food and raiment and such temporary matters—these may be left with God; but take sacred cares upon you—the cares of holy and gracious living. Yoke your best thoughts to the car of holiness—"be careful to maintain good works."

What are good works? The term is greatly inclusive. Of course we number in the list works of charity, works of kindness and benevolence, works of piety, reverence, and holiness. Such works as comply with the two tables of command are good works. Works of obedience are good works. What you do because God bids you do it, is a good work. Works of love to Jesus, done out of a desire for his glory, these are good works. The common actions of every-day life, when they are well done, with a view not to merit, but out of gratitude—these are good works. "Be careful to maintain good works" of every sort and kind. You are sure to be working in some

way, mind that your works are good works. If you have commenced well, be careful to *maintain* good works; and if you have maintained them, go on to increase them. I preached last Thursday night as now —salvation by grace, and by grace alone; and if I know how to speak plainly, I certainly did speak plainly then, and I hope I do so now. Remember, you are saved by grace, and not by works of righteousness; but after you are saved there comes in this precept, "Be careful to maintain good works."

This precept is *special in its direction.* To the sinner, that he may be saved, we say not a word concerning good works, except to remind him that he has none of them. To the believer who is saved, we say ten thousand words concerning good works, beseeching him to bring forth much fruit, that so he may be Christ's disciple. There is all the difference between the living and the dead: the living we arouse to work; the dead must first receive life. Exhortations which may most fittingly be addressed to the regenerate may be quite out of place when spoken to those who are under the power of unbelief, and are strangers to the family of grace. The voice of our text is to them that have believed in God; faith is pre-supposed as the absolutely indispensable foundation of good works. You cannot work that which will please God if you are without faith in him. As there is no coming to God in prayer without believing that he is and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, so there is no bringing any other sacrifice to him without a faith suitable to the business in hand. For living works you must have a living faith, and for loving works you must have a loving faith. When we know and trust God, then with holy intelligence and sacred confidence we work his pleasure. Good works must be done freely: God wants not slaves to grace his throne; he seeks not from us the forced works of men in bondage. He desires the spontaneous zeal of consecrated souls who rejoice to do his will, because they are not their own, but bought with the precious blood of Jesus. It is the heartiness of our work which is the heart of it. To those who have renewed hearts, this exhortation is addressed—"Be careful to maintain good works."

This precept is *weighty in importance*, for it is prefaced thus: "This is a faithful saying." This is one among four great matters thus described. It is not trivial, it is not a temporary precept which belongs to an extinct race and a past age. "This is a faithful saying"—a true Christian proverb, "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Let the ungodly never say that we who believe in free grace think lightly of a holy life. O you who are the people of my care, I charge you before God and the holy angels that, in proportion as you hold the truth of doctrine, you follow out the purity of precept! You hold the truth, and you know that salvation is not of man, nor of man's work: it is not of merit, but of mercy, not of ourselves, but of God alone; I beseech you to be as right in practice as in doctrine, and therefore be careful to maintain good works. Dogs will open their mouths, but do not find bones for them: the enemies of the faith will cavil at it, but do not give them ground of accusation. May God the Holy Spirit help you so to live that they may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you!

I am afraid that this precept of being careful to maintain good works is *neglected in practice*, or else the apostle would not have said to Titus, "These things I will that thou affirm constantly." Titus must repeat perpetually the precept which commands the careful maintenance of good works. Beloved, I fear that preachers often think too well of their congregations, and talk to them as if they were all perfect, or nearly so. I cannot thus flatter you. I have been astounded when I have seen what professing Christians can do. How some dare call themselves followers of Jesus I cannot tell! It is horrible. We condemn Judas, but his fellow is to be found in many. Our Lord is still sold for gain. He still has at his heels sons of perdition who kiss him and betray him. There are still persons in our churches who need to have the ten commandments read to them every Sabbath-day. It is not a bad plan of the Church of England, to put up the ten commandments near the communion table where they can be clearly seen. Some people need to see them; though I am afraid, when they come in their way, they wink hard at some of the commands, and go away and forget that they have seen them. Common morality is neglected by some who call themselves Christians.

My brethren, such things ought not to be, but as long as they are so we must hear Paul saying: "I will that thou affirm constantly that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Certain people turn on their heel, and say, "That is legal talk. The preacher is preaching up works instead of grace." What! will you dare to say that? I will meet you face to face at God's right hand at the last day if you dare to insinuate so gross a libel. Dare you say that I do not preach continually salvation by the grace of God, and by the grace of God only? Having preached salvation by grace without a moment's hesitation, I shall also continually affirm that they which have believed in God must be "careful to maintain good works."

This, mark you, is *supported by argument*. The apostle presses home his precept by saying: "These things are good and profitable unto men." He instances other things which are neither good nor profitable, namely, "Foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law." In these days some are occupied with questions about the future state, instead of accepting the plain testimony of Scripture, and some give more prominence to speculations drawn from prophecy than to the maintaining of good works. I reverence the prophecies; but I have small patience with those whose one business is guessing at their meaning. One whose family was utterly unruly and immoral met with a Christian friend, and said to him: "Do you quite see the meaning of the Seven Trumpets?" "No," answered his friend, "I do not; and if you looked more to your seven children the seven trumpets would suffer no harm." To train up your children and instruct your servants, and order your household aright, are "things which are good and profitable unto men." A life of godliness is better than the understanding of mysteries. The eternal truth of God is to be defended at all hazards, but questions which do not signify the turn of a hair to either God or man may be left to settle themselves. "Be

careful to maintain good works," whether you are a babe in grace or a strong man in Christ Jesus. A holy household is as a pillar to the church of God. Children brought up in the fear of God are as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace. You, husbands and wives, that live together in holy love, and see your children serving God, you adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour! Tradesmen who are esteemed for integrity, merchants who bargain to their own hurt but change not, dealers who can be trusted in the market with uncounted gold, your acts are good and profitable both to the church and to the world! Men are won to Christ when they see Christianity embodied in the good and the true. But when religion is a thin veneer or a mere touch of tinsel, they call it "humbug"; and rough as the word is, it is worthy of the contemptible thing which it describes. If our religion comes from the very soul, if our life is the life of Christ in us, and we prove that we have new hearts and right spirits by acting the honourable, the kindly, the truly Christian part, these things are good and profitable unto those who watch us, for they may induce them to seek for better things.

I pray you, my beloved, be careful to maintain good works. I thus stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: if your minds were not pure I would not stir them up, for it would be of no use to raise the mud which now lies quiet. I stir you up because I am not afraid to do so, but am sure that it will do you good. You will take home this exhortation, and you will say, each one to himself, "What can I do more for Jesus? How can I walk more worthy of my profession? How can I be careful to maintain good works?" So may God bless you!

You who do not believe in God, who have not come to trust in his dear Son, I am not talking to you. To you, I must say, first, that you must be made new creatures. I do not talk to a crab-tree, and say, "Bear apples." It cannot. The tree must first become good before the fruit can be good. "Ye must be born again." You will never be better till you are made new creatures. You must be spiritually slain, and then made alive again. There must be an end of you, and there must be a beginning of Christ in you. God grant that this may happen at once, and may you immediately believe in the Lord Jesus! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Titus ii. 6—15; iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—306, 469, 471.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, THE CONQUERING WEAPON.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."—Revelation xii. 11.

WHEREVER evil appears, it is to be fought with by the children of God in the name of Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Ghost. When evil appeared in an angel, straightway there was war in heaven. Evil in mortal men is to be striven against by all regenerate men. If sin comes to us in the form of an angel of light we must still war with it. If it comes with all manner of deceivableness of unrighteousness, we must not parley for a single moment, but begin the battle forthwith, if indeed we belong to the armies of the Lord. Evil is at its very worst in Satan himself: with him we fight. He is no mean adversary. The evil spirits which are under his control are, any one of them, terrible foes; but when Satan himself personally attacks a Christian, any one of us will be hard put to it.

When this dragon blocks our road, we shall need heavenly aid to force our passage. A pitched battle with Apollyon may not often occur; but when it does, you will know it painfully: you will record it in your diary as one of the darkest days you have ever lived; and you will eternally praise your God, when you overcome him. But even if Satan were ten times stronger and more crafty than he is, we are bound to wrestle with him: we cannot for a moment hesitate, or offer him terms. Evil in its highest, strongest, and proudest form is to be assailed by the soldier of the cross, and nothing must end the war but complete victory. Satan is *the* enemy, the enemy of enemies. That prayer of our Lord's, which we usually render, "Deliver us from evil," has the special significance of "Deliver us from the evil one"; because he is the chief embodiment of evil, and in him evil is intensified, and has come to its highest strength. That man had need have Omnipotence with him who hopes to overcome the enemy of God and man. He would destroy all godly ones if he could; and though he cannot, such is his inveterate hate, that he worries those whom he cannot devour with a malicious eagerness.

In this chapter the devil is called the "great red dragon." He

is great in capacity, intelligence, energy, and experience. Whether or not he was the chief of all angels before he fell I do not know. Some have thought that he was such, and that when he heard that a man was to sit upon the throne of God, out of very jealousy he rebelled against the Most High. This also is conjecture. But we do know that he was and is an exceedingly great spirit as compared with us. He is a being great in evil: the prince of darkness, having the power of death. He shows his malice against the saints by accusing the brethren day and night before God. In the prophets we have the record of Satan standing to accuse Joshua the servant of God. Satan also accused Job of serving God from mercenary motives: "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and all that he hath?"

This ever active enemy desires to tempt as well as accuse: he would have us, and sift us as wheat. In calling him the dragon, the Holy Spirit seems to hint at his mysterious power and character. To us a spirit such as he is must ever be a mystery in his being and working. Satan is a mysterious personage though he is not a mythical one. We can never doubt his existence if we have once come into conflict with him; yet he is to us all the more real because so mysterious. If he were flesh and blood it would be far easier to contend with him; but to fight with this spiritual wickedness in high places is a terrible task. As a dragon he is full of cunning and ferocity. In him force is allied with craft; and if he cannot achieve his purpose at once by power, he waits his time. He deludes, he deceives; in fact, he is said to deceive the whole world. What a power of deception must reside in him, when under his influence the third part of the stars of heaven are made to fall, and myriads of men in all ages have worshipped demons and idols! He has steeped the minds of men in delusion, so that they cannot see that they should worship none but God, their Maker. He is styled "the old serpent"; and this reminds us how practised he is in every evil art. He was a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies. After thousands of years of constant practice in deception he is much too cunning for us. If we think that we can match him by craft we are grievous fools, for he knows vastly more than the wisest of mortals; and if it once comes to a game of policies, he will certainly clear the board, and sweep our tricks into the bag. To this cunning he adds great speed, so that he is quick to assail at any moment, darting down upon us like a hawk upon a poor chick. He is not everywhere present; but it is hard to say where he is not. He cannot be omnipresent; but yet, by that majestic craft of his, he so manages his armies of fallen ones that, like a great general, he superintends the whole field of battle, and seems present at every point. No door can shut him out, no height of piety can rise beyond his reach. He meets us in all our weaknesses, and assails us from every point of the compass. He comes upon us unaware, and gives us wounds which are not easily healed.

But yet, dear friends, powerful as this infernal spirit certainly must be, his power is defeated when we are resolved never to be at peace with him. We must never dream of terms or truce with evil. To suppose that we can let him alone, and all will be well, is a deadly error. We must fight or perish: evil will slay us if we do not slay it.

Our only safety will lie in a determined, vigorous opposition to sin, whatever shape it assumes, whatever it may threaten, whatever it may promise. The Holy Ghost alone can maintain in us this enmity to sin.

According to the text it is said of the saints, "They overcame him." We are never to rest until it is said of us also, "They overcame him." He is a foeman worthy of your steel. Do you refuse the conflict? Do you think of turning back? You have no armour for your back. To cease to fight is to be overcome. You have your choice between the two, either to gird up the loins of your minds for a life-long resistance, or else to be Satan's slaves for ever. I pray God that you may awake, arise, and give battle to the foe. Resolve once for all that by the grace of God you will be numbered with those who overcome the arch-enemy.

Our text brings before us a very important subject for consideration:—*What is the conquering weapon?* With what sword did they fight who have overcome the great red dragon? Listen! "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Secondly, *how do we use that weapon?* We do as they did who overcame "by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

I. First, WHAT IS THIS CONQUERING WEAPON? They overcame him by "the blood of the Lamb."

The blood of the Lamb signifies, first, *the death of the Son of God.* The sufferings of Jesus Christ might be set forth by some other figure, but his death on the cross requires the mention of blood. Our Lord was not only bruised and smitten, but he was put to death. His heart's blood was made to flow. He of whom we speak was God over all, blessed for ever; but he condescended to take our manhood into union with his Godhead in a mysterious manner. He was born at Bethlehem a babe, he grew as a child, he ripened into manhood, and lived here among us, eating and drinking, suffering and rejoicing, sleeping and labouring as men do. He died in very deed and of a truth, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa. That death was the grand fact which is set forth by the words "the blood of the Lamb." We are to view Jesus as the Lamb of God's passover: not merely separated from others, dedicated to be Israel's memorial, and consecrated to divine service, but as the Lamb *slain.* Remember, that Christ viewed as living, and not as having died, is not a saving Christ. He himself saith, "I am he that liveth *and was dead.*" The moderns cry, "Why not preach more about his life, and less about his death?" I reply, Preach his life as much as you will, but never apart from his death; for it is by his blood that we are redeemed. "We preach Christ." Complete the sentence. "We preach Christ *crucified,*" says the apostle. Ah, yes! there is the point. It is the death of the Son of God which is the conquering weapon. Had he not poured forth his soul unto death, even to the death of the cross—had he not been numbered with the transgressors, and put to a death of shame—we should have had no weapon with which to overcome the dragon prince. By "the blood of the Lamb" we understand the death of the Son of God. Hear it, O men! Because you have sinned, Jesus dies that you may be cleared from your sin. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," and died that he might redeem us

from all unrighteousness. The point is his death, and, paradoxically, this death is the vital point of the gospel. The death of Christ is the death of sin and the defeat of Satan, and hence it is the life of our hope, and the assurance of his victory. Because he poured out his soul unto the death, he divides the spoil with the strong.

Next, by "the blood of the Lamb" we understand *our Lord's death as a substitutionary sacrifice.* Let us be very clear here. It is not said that they overcame the arch-enemy by the blood of Jesus, or the blood of Christ, but by the blood *of the Lamb;* and the words are expressly chosen because, under the figure of a lamb, we have set before us a sacrifice. The blood of Jesus Christ, shed because of his courage for the truth, or out of pure philanthropy, or out of self-denial, conveys no special gospel to men, and has no peculiar power about it. Truly it is an example worthy to beget martyrs; but it is not the way of salvation for guilty men. If you proclaim the death of the Son of God, but do not show that he died the just for the unjust to bring us to God, you have not preached the blood of the Lamb. You must make it known that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him," and that "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," or you have not declared the meaning of the blood of the Lamb. There is no overcoming sin without a substitutionary sacrifice. The lamb under the old law was brought by the offender to make atonement for his offence, and in his place it was slain: this was the type of Christ taking the sinner's place, bearing the sinner's sin, and suffering in the sinner's stead, and thus vindicating the justice of God, and making it possible for him to be just and the justifier of him that believeth. I understand this to be the conquering weapon—the death of the Son of God set forth as the propitiation for sin. Sin must be punished: it is punished in Christ's death. Here is the hope of men.

Furthermore, I understand by the expression, "The blood of the Lamb," that *our Lord's death was effective for the taking away of sin.* When John the Baptist first pointed to Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Our Lord Jesus has actually taken away sin by his death. Beloved, we are sure that he had offered an acceptable and effectual propitiation when he said, "It is finished." Either he did put away sin, or he did not. If he did not, how will it ever be put away? If he did, then are believers clear. Altogether apart from anything that we do or are, our glorious Substitute took away our sin, as in the type the scapegoat carried the sin of Israel into the wilderness. In the case of all those for whom our Lord offered himself as a substitutionary sacrifice, the justice of God finds no hindrance to its fullest flow: it is consistent with justice that God should bless the redeemed. Near nineteen hundred years ago Jesus paid the dreadful debt of all his elect, and made a full atonement for the whole mass of the iniquities of them that shall believe in him, thereby removing the whole tremendous load, and casting it by one lift of his pierced hand into the depths of the sea. When Jesus died, an atonement was offered by him and accepted by the Lord God, so that before the high court of heaven there was a distinct removal of sin from the whole body of which Christ is the head. In the fulness of time each redeemed one

individually accepts for himself the great atonement by an act of personal faith, but the atonement itself was made long before. I believe this to be one of the edges of the conquering weapon. We are to preach that the Son of God has come in the flesh and died for human sin, and that in dying he did not only make it possible for God to forgive, but he secured forgiveness for all who are in him. He did not die to make men savable, but to save them. He came not that sin might be put aside at some future time, but to put it away there and then by the sacrifice of himself; for by his death he "finished transgressions, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness." Believers may know that when Jesus died they were delivered from the claims of law, and when he rose again their justification was secured. The blood of the Lamb is a real price, which did effectually ransom. The blood of the Lamb is a real cleansing, which did really purge away sin. This we believe and declare; and by this sign we conquer. Christ crucified, Christ the sacrifice for sin, Christ the effectual redeemer of men, we will proclaim everywhere, and thus put to rout the powers of darkness.

II. I have shown you the sword; I now come, in the second place, to speak to the question, How DO WE USE IT? "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb."

When a man gets a sword, you cannot be quite certain how he will use it. A gentleman has purchased a very expensive sword with a golden hilt and an elaborate scabbard: he hangs it up in his hall, and exhibits it to his friends. Occasionally he draws it out from the sheath, and he says, "Feel how keen is the edge!" The precious blood of Jesus is not meant for us merely to admire and exhibit. We must not be content to talk about it, and extol it, and do nothing with it; but we are to use it in the great crusade against unholiness and unrighteousness, till it is said of us, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." This precious blood is to be used for overcoming, and consequently for holy warfare. We dishonour it if we do not use it to that end. Some, I fear, use the precious blood of Christ only as a quietus to their consciences. They say to themselves, "He made atonement for sin, therefore let me take my rest." This is doing a grievous wrong to the great sacrifice. I grant you that the blood of Jesus does speak better things than that of Abel, and that it sweetly cries, "Peace! Peace!" within the troubled conscience; but that is not all that it does. A man who wants the blood of Jesus for nothing but the mean and selfish reason, that after having been forgiven through it he may say, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry: hear sermons, enjoy the hope of eternal felicity, and do nothing"—such a man blasphemes the precious blood, and makes it an unholy thing. We are to use the glorious mystery of atoning blood as our chief means of overcoming sin and Satan: its power is for holiness. See how the text puts it: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb": these saints used the doctrine of atonement not as a pillow to rest their weariness, but as a weapon to subdue their sin. O my brothers, to some of us atonement by blood is our battle-axe and weapon of war, by which we conquer in our struggle for purity and godliness—a struggle in which we have continued now

these many years. By the atoning blood we withstand corruption within and temptation without. This is that weapon which nothing can resist.

Let me show you your battle-field. Our first place of conflict is in the heavenlies, and the second is down below on earth.

First, then, you, my brothers and sisters who believe in the blood of Jesus, have to do battle with Satan *in the heavenlies;* and there you must overcome him "by the blood of the Lamb." "How?" say you. I will lead you into this subject. First, you are to regard Satan this day as being already literally and *truly overcome through the death of the Lord Jesus.* Satan is already a vanquished enemy. By faith grasp your Lord's victory as your own, since he triumphed in your nature and on your behalf. The Lord Jesus Christ went up to Calvary, and there fought with the prince of darkness, utterly defeated him, and destroyed his power. He led captivity captive. He bruised the serpent's head. The victory was the victory of all who are in Christ. He is the representative seed of the woman, and you who are of that seed and are in Christ actually and experimentally, you then and there overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb. Can you get a hold of this truth? Do you not know that you were circumcised in his circumcision, crucified on his cross, buried with him in baptism, and therein also risen with him in his resurrection? He is your federal head, and you being members of his body did in him what he did. Come, my soul, thou hast conquered Satan by thy Lord's victory. Wilt thou not be brave enough to fight a vanquished foe, and trample down the enemy whom thy Lord has already thrust down? Thou needest not be afraid, but say, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We have overcome sin, death and hell in the person and work of our great Lord; and we should be greatly encouraged by that which has been already wrought in our name. Already we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. If Jesus had not overcome the enemy, certainly we never should have done so; but his personal triumph has secured ours. By faith we rise into the conquering place this day. In the heavenlies we triumph, as also in every place. We rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Michael of the angels, the Redeemer of men; for by him we see Satan cast out, and all the powers of evil hurled from their places of power and eminence.

This day I would have you overcome Satan in the heavenlies in another sense: *you must overcome him as the accuser.* At times you hear in your heart a voice arousing memory and startling conscience; a voice which seems in heaven to be a remembrance of your guilt. Hark to that deep, croaking voice, boding evil! Satan is urging before the throne of justice all your former sins. Can you hear him? He begins with your childish faults and your youthful follies. Truly a black memory. He does not let one of your wickednesses drop out. Things which you had forgotten he cunningly revives. He knows your secret sins, for he had a hand in most of them. He knows the resistance which you offered to the gospel, and the way in which you stifled conscience. He knows the sins of darkness, the sins of the bedchamber, the crimes of the inner chambers of imagery. Since you have been a

Christian he has marked your wickedness, and asked, in fierce sarcastic tones, "Is this a child of God? Is this an heir of heaven?" He hopes to convict us of hypocrisy or of apostasy.

The foul fiend tells out the wanderings of our hearts, the deadness of our desires in prayer, the filthy thoughts that dropped into our minds when we have been at worship. Alas! we have to confess that we have even tolerated doubts as to eternal verities, and suspicions of the love and faithfulness of God. When the accuser is about his evil business, he does not have to look far for matter of accusation, nor for facts to support it. Do these accusations stagger you? Do you cry, "My God, how can I face thee? for all this is true, and the iniquities now brought to my remembrance are such as I cannot deny. I have violated thy law in a thousand ways, and I cannot justify myself." Now is your opportunity for overcoming through the blood of the Lamb. When the accuser has said his say, and aggravated all your transgressions, be not ashamed to step forward and say, "But I have an advocate as well as an accuser. O Jesus, my Saviour, speak for me!" When he speaks, what does he plead but his own blood? "For all these sins I have made atonement," says he, "all these iniquities were laid on me in the day of the Lord's anger, and I have taken them away." Brethren, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Jesus has borne the penalty due to us: he has discharged for us upon the cross all our liabilities to the justice of God, and we are free for ever, because our surety suffered in our place. Where is the accuser now? That dragon voice is silenced by the blood of the Lamb. Nothing else can ever silence the accuser's cruel voice but the voice of the blood which tells of the infinite God accepting, in our behalf, the sacrifice which he himself supplied. Justice decrees that the sinful shall be clear, because the accepted substitute has borne his sin in his own body on the tree. Come, brother or sister, the next time thou hast to do with Satan as an accuser in the heavenly places, take care that thou defend thyself with no weapon but the atonement. All comfort drawn from inward feelings or outward works will fall short; but the bleeding wounds of Jesus will plead with full and overwhelming argument, and answer all. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Who, then, shall accuse the child of God? Every accuser shall be overcome by the invincible argument of the blood of the Lamb.

Still further, the believer will have need to overcome the enemy in the heavenly places in reference to *access to God*. It may happen that when we are most intent upon communing with God, the adversary hinders us. Our heart and our flesh cry out for God, the living God; but from one cause or another we are unable to draw nigh unto the throne. The heart is heavy, sin is rampant, care is harassing, and Satanic insinuation is busy. You seem shut out from God, and the enemy triumphs over you. You feel very near the world, and very near the flesh, and very near the devil: but you mourn your miserable distance from God. You are like a child who cannot reach his father's door

because a black dog barks at him from the door. What is the way of access? If the foul fiend will not move out of the way, can we force our passage? By what weapon can we drive away the adversary so as to come to God? Is it not written that we are made nigh by the blood? Is there not a new and living way consecrated for us? Have we not boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus? We are sure of God's love when we see that Christ died for us; we are sure of God's favour when we see how that atonement has removed our transgressions far from us. We perceive our liberty to come to the Father, and therefore we each one say—

> "I will approach thee—I will force
> My way through obstacles to thee;
> To thee for strength will have recourse,
> To thee for consolation flee!"

Pleading the propitiation made by the blood of the Lamb, we dare draw nigh to God. Behold, the evil spirit makes way before us. The sacred name of Jesus is one before which he flees. This will drive away his blasphemous suggestions and foul insinuations better than anything that you can invent. The dog of hell knows the dread name which makes him lie down: we must confront him with the authority, and specially with the atonement of the Lamb of God. He will rage and rave all the more if we send Moses to him; for he derives his power from our breaches of the law, and we cannot silence him unless we bring to him the great Lord who has kept the law, and made it honourable.

We next must *overcome the enemy in prayer.* Alas! we cannot always pray as we would. Do you never feel, when you are in prayer, as if something choked your utterance—and, what is worse, deadened your heart? Instead of having wings as of an eagle to mount to heaven, a secret evil clips your wings, and you cannot rise. You say within yourself, "I have no faith, and I cannot expect to succeed with God without faith. I seem to have no love; or, if I have any, my heart lies asleep, and I cannot stir myself to plead with God. Oh, that I could come out of my closet, saying, 'VICI! VICI!'—'I have overcome, I have overcome;' but, alas! instead thereof I groan in vain, and come away unrelieved. I have been half dead, cold, and stolid, and I cannot hope that I have prevailed with God in prayer." Whenever you are in this condition fly to the blood of the Lamb as your chief remedy. When you plead this master argument you will arouse yourself, and you will prevail with God. You will feel rest in pleading it, and a sweet assurance of success at the mercy-seat. Try the method at once. This is the way in which you should use this plea. Say, "My God, I am utterly unworthy, and I own it; but, I beseech thee, hear me for the honour of thy dear Son. By his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death and burial, I beseech thee hear me! O Lord, let the blood of thine Only-begotten prevail with thee! Canst thou put aside his groans, his tears, his death, when they speak on my behalf?" If you can thus come to pleading terms with God upon this ground, you must and will prevail. Jesus must be heard in heaven. The voice of his blood is eloquent with

God. If you plead the atoning sacrifice, you must overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

Thus have I spoken of overcoming in the heavenlies; but I shall have to show you how you must contend against the evil one in a lower sphere, even on this earth. You must first overcome in the heavenly places before the throne; and when you have been thus triumphant with God in prayer, you will have grace to go forth to service and to defeat evil among your fellow-men. How often have I personally found that the battle must first be fought above! We must overcome *in order to service.* Many a score of times of late I should not have ventured into this pulpit had it not been for power at the mercy-seat. Those who know the burden of the Lord are often bowed down, and would not be able to bear up at all were it not for having in secret battled with their enemy and won the day. I have been bowed down before the Lord, and in his presence I have pleaded the precious blood as the reason for obtaining help, and the help has been given. Faith, having once made sure that Jesus is hers, helps herself out of the treasury of God to all that she needs. Satan would deny her, but in the power of the blood she takes possession of covenant blessings. You say to yourself, "I am weak, but in the Lord, my God, there is power: I take it to myself. I am hard and cold, but here is tenderness and warmth, and I appropriate it. It pleased the Father that in Jesus should all fulness dwell, and by virtue of his precious blood, I take out of that fulness what I need, and then with help thus obtained I meet the enemy and overcome him." Satan would hinder our getting supplies of grace wherewith to overcome him; but with the blood-mark on our foot we can go anywhere; with the blood-mark on our hand we dare take anything. Having access with confidence, we also take with freedom whatsoever we need, and thus we are provided against all necessities, and armed against all assaults through the atoning sacrifice. This is the fountain of supply, and the shield of security: this, indeed, is the channel through which we receive strength for victory.

We overcome the great enemy by *laying hold upon the all-sufficiency of God*, when we really feel the power of the precious blood of Christ. Thus, being victorious in the heavenlies, we come down to the pulpit or to the Sunday-school class made strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Having overcome Satan at the throne of grace, we see him like lightning fall from heaven, even before our feeble instrumentality. We speak, and God speaks with us; we long for souls, and God's great heart is yearning with us. We importune men to come, and the Lord also pleads with them to come, so that they no longer resist. Spiritual power of a holy kind rests upon us to overcome the spiritual power of an evil kind which is exerted by Satan, the world, and the flesh. The Lord scatters the power of the enemy, and breaks the spell which holds men captive. Through the blood of the Lamb we become masters of the situation, and the weakest among us is able to work great wonders. Coming forth to the service of God in the power of our victory in heaven gained by pleading the blood of the Lamb, we march on conquering and to conquer, and no power of the enemy is able to stand against us.

It is time that I now showed you how this same fight is carried on *on earth*. Amongst men in these lower places of conflict saints overcome through the blood of the Lamb *by their testimony to that blood*. Every believer is to bear witness to the atoning sacrifice and its power to save. He is to tell out the doctrine; he is to emphasize it by earnest faith in it; and he is to support it and prove it by his experience of the effect of it. You cannot all speak from the pulpit, but you can all speak for Jesus as opportunity is given you. Our main business is to bear witness with the blood in the power of the Spirit. To this point we can all testify. You cannot go into all manner of deep doctrines or curious points, but you can tell to all those round about you that "There is life in a look at the Crucified One." You can bear witness to the power of the blood of Jesus in your own soul. If you do this, you will overcome men in many ways. First, you will *arouse them out of apathy*. This age is more indifferent to true religion than almost any other. It is alive enough to error, but to the old faith it turns a deaf ear. Yet I have noticed persons captivated by the truth of substitution who would not listen to anything else. If any discourse can hold men, as the ancient mariner detained the wedding guest, it is the story of divine love, incarnate in the person of Jesus, bleeding and dying for guilty men. Try that story when attention flags. It has a fascination about it. The marvellous history of the Son of God, who loved his enemies, and died for them—this will arrest them. The history of the Holy One who stood in the sinners' place, and was in consequence put to shame, and agony, and death—this will touch them. The sight of the bleeding Saviour overcomes obduracy and carelessness.

The doctrine of the blood of the Lamb prevents or *scatters error*. I do not think that by reasoning we often confute error to any practical purpose. We may confute it rhetorically and doctrinally, but men still stick to it. But the doctrine of the precious blood, when it once gets into the heart, drives error out of it, and sets up the throne of truth. You cannot be clinging to an atoning sacrifice, and still delight in modern heresies. Those who deny inspiration are sure to get rid of the vicarious atonement, because it will not allow their errors. Let us go on proclaiming the doctrine of the great sacrifice, and this will kill the vipers of heresy. Let us uplift the cross, and never mind what other people say. Perhaps we have taken too much notice of them already. Let the dogs bark, it is their nature to. Go on preaching Christ crucified. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ!

We also overcome men in this way, by *softening rebellious hearts*. Men stand out against the law of God, and defy the vengeance of God; but the love of God in Christ Jesus disarms them. The Holy Spirit causes men to yield through the softening influence of the cross. A bleeding Saviour makes men throw down their weapons of rebellion. "If he loves me so," they say, "I cannot do other than love him in return." We overcome men's obduracy by the blood, shed for many for the remission of sins.

How wonderfully this same blood of the Lamb *overcomes despair*. Have you never seen a man shut up in the iron cage? It has been

my painful duty to talk with several of such prisoners. I have seen the captive shake the iron bars, but he could not break them, or break from them. He has implored us to set him free by some means; but we have been powerless. Glory be to God, the blood is a universal solvent, and it has dissolved the iron-bars of despair, until the poor captive conscience has been able to escape. How sweet for the desponding to sing—

> "I do believe, I will believe,
> That Jesus died for me"!

Believing *that*, all doubts, and fears, and despairs, fly away, and the man is at ease.

There is nothing, indeed, dear friends, which the blood of the Lamb will not overcome; for see how it *overcomes vice*, and every form of sin. The world is foul with evil, like a stable which has long been the lair of filthy creatures. What can cleanse it? What but this matchless stream? Satan makes sin seem pleasurable, but the cross reveals its bitterness. If Jesus died because of sin, men begin to see that sin must be a murderous thing. Even when sin was but imputed to the Saviour, it made him pour out his soul unto death; it must, then, be a hideous evil to those who are actually and personally guilty of it. If God's rod made Christ sweat great drops of blood, what will his axe do when he executes the capital sentence upon impenitent men! Yes, we overcome the deadly sweetness and destructive pleasurableness of sin by the blood of the Lamb.

This blood overcomes *the natural lethargy of men towards obedience;* it stimulates them to holiness. If anything can make a man holy it is a firm faith in the atoning sacrifice. When a man knows that Jesus died for him, he feels that he is not his own, but bought with a price, and therefore he must live unto him that died for him and rose again. In the atonement I see a motive equal to the greatest heroism; yes, a motive which will stimulate to perfect holiness. What manner of persons ought we to be for whom such a sacrifice has been presented! Now are we quickened into intensity of zeal and devotion. See, dear brothers, how to use the blood of the Lamb in this lower sphere while contending with evil among men.

But I must close with this. It is not merely by testimony that we use this potent truth. *We must support that testimony by our zeal and energy.* We need concentrated, consecrated energy; for it is written, "They loved not their lives unto the death." We shall not overcome Satan if we are fine gentlemen, fond of ease and honour. As long as Christian people must needs enjoy the world, the devil will suffer little at their hands. They that overcame the world in the old days were humble men and women, generally poor, always despised, who were never ashamed of Christ, who only lived to tell of his love, and died by tens of thousands rather than cease to bear testimony to the blood of the Lamb. They overcame by their heroism; their intense devotion to the cause secured the victory. Their lives to them were as nothing when compared with the honour of their Lord.

Brethren, if we are to win great victories we must have greater courage. Some of you hardly dare speak about the blood of Christ

in any but the most godly company; and scarcely there. You are very retiring. You love yourselves too much to get into trouble through your religion. Surely you cannot be of that noble band that love not their own lives unto the death! Many dare not hold the old doctrine nowadays because they would be thought narrow and bigoted, and this would be too galling. They call us old fools. It is very likely we are; but we are not ashamed to be fools for Christ's sake, and the truth's sake. We believe in the blood of the Lamb, despite the discoveries of science. We shall never give up the doctrine of atoning sacrifice to please modern culture. What little reputation we have is as dear to us as another man's character is to him; but we will cheerfully let it go in this struggle for the central truth of revelation. It will be sweet to be forgotten and lost sight of, or to be vilified and abused, if the old faith in the substitutionary sacrifice can be kept alive. This much we are resolved on, we will be true to our convictions concerning the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus; for if we give up this, what is there left? God will not do anything by us if we are false to the cross. He uses the men who spare not their reputations when these are called for in defence of truth. Oh to be at a white heat! Oh to flame with zeal for Jesus! O my brethren, hold you to the old faith, and say, "As for the respect of men, I can readily forfeit it; but as for the truth of God, that I can never give up." This is the day for men to be men; for, alas! the most are soft, molluscous creatures. Now we need backbones as well as heads. To believe the truth concerning the Lamb of God, and truly to believe it, this is the essential of an overcoming life. Oh for courage, constancy, fixedness, self-denial, willingness to be made nothing of for Christ! God give us to be faithful witnesses to the blood of the Lamb in the midst of this ungodly world!

As for those of you who are not saved, does not this subject give you a hint? Your hope lies in the blood of the Lamb.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away,
Like doves, to Jesus' wounds."

The atoning sacrifice, which is our glory, is your salvation. Trust in him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. Begin with this, and you are saved. Every good and holy thing which goes with salvation will follow after; but now, this morning, I pray you accept a present salvation through the blood of the Lamb. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation xii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—304, 302, 674.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ALL AT IT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."—Acts viii. 4, 5.

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."—Acts viii. 35.

"THEY that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." God intended that his church should be scattered over the world. There was a tendency in our humanity at first to remain together; hence the first grey fathers endeavoured to build a central tower, around which the race should rally. But God confounded their language, and scattered them from Babel, that they might people all the world. Jerusalem was at first the central point of Christianity. The church there was highly favoured with its twelve apostles and a multitude of minor lights; and the tendency would have been to keep the centre strong. I have often heard the argument, "Do not have too many out-stations, keep up a strong central force." But God's plan was that the holy force should be distributed: the holy seed must be sown. To do this the Lord made use of the rough hand of persecution. The disciples could not stay in Jerusalem: Saul made them run for their lives, or, if they did not, he shut them up in prison; and prisons in those days were so foul and noisome as to be the vestibules of the grave. One went this way, and one went the other way; and the faithful were scattered.

In every church where there is really the power of the Spirit of God, the Lord will cause it to be spread abroad, more or less. He never means that a church should be like a nut shut up in a shell; nor like ointment enclosed in a box. The precious perfume of the gospel must be poured forth to sweeten the air. Just now we have little of that form of persecution which drives men from home. But godly people are scattered through the necessity of earning a livelihood. Sometimes we regret that certain young men should have to go to a distance; but should we regret it? We lament that certain families must migrate to the colonies. Does not the Lord by this means sow the good seed widely? It is very pleasant to be comfortably settled under an edifying ministry, but the Lord has need of some

of his servants in places where there is no light. In many ways the great Head of the church scatters his servants abroad; but they ought of themselves to scatter voluntarily. Every Christian should say, "Where can I do the most good?" and if he can do more good anywhere beneath the sun than in the land of his birth, he is bound to go there, if he can. God will have us scattered; and if we will not go afield willingly, he may use providential necessity as the forcible means of our dispersion.

The Lord's design is not the scattering in itself, but scattering for a purpose. He intended that, being scattered, the saints of Jerusalem should go everywhere preaching the word. Upon this I am going to speak at this time.

I would call your attention to the translation in the Revised Version, where Philip is said to have "proclaimed" the word. The word "proclaim" is not quite so subject to the modern sense which has spoiled the word "preach." "Preach" has come to be a sort of official term for delivering a set discourse; whereas gospel preaching is talking, discoursing, and telling out the gospel in any way. We are to make known the word of the Lord.

I. In handling my subject, I shall call your attention, first, to THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE WORK OF EVANGELIZING—of course I mean its universality among believers. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." They; that is, all the scattered. There does not appear to have been any exception. You thought it would have read, "Then the apostles went everywhere preaching the word." They were just the people who did not go at all; for the twelve remained at headquarters as yet; but the rest went everywhere preaching the word. Generals may have to stand still in the centre of the battle to direct the forces; but in this battle all the common soldiers marched to the fight. This was to be a soldiers' battle; and of that sort all the battles of the cross ought to be.

Observe then, first, that in this *there were no professional distinctions*. It is not said that the ministers, being scattered abroad, went everywhere proclaiming the word; but the whole of the scattered. Scarcely anything has been more injurious to the kingdom of Christ than the distinction between clergy and laity. No such distinction was ever laid down by the Spirit of God. "Ye are God's *kleros*": all God's saints are God's inheritance; and we should regard ourselves as such. "Ye are a royal priesthood." "He hath made us unto our God kings and priests." As in heaven there is no temple because it is all temple, so in the church of God there is no priesthood because it is all priesthood.

We have among ourselves a distinction between ministers and others. But you are all to minister. There are many ministries of one form and another; and though God gives to his church apostles, teachers, pastors, evangelists, and the like, yet not by way of setting up a professional caste of men, who are to do the work for God while others sit still. I have aforetime used the following parable:—In olden times a certain host had conquered wherever they went forward in one mass. But it came to pass that they thought themselves so exceeding strong that they said, "Let not every man go to war. Let us choose a few, and

make this few into a select standing army." They picked out their champions, and sent them to the war. These continued the conflict with difficulty; many of them fell in the fight. No provinces were added to the kingdom, and things were at a standstill. They had followed a fatal policy. The true method was for the whole of them to march to battle. This is the true and only policy of Christianity —all Christians soldiers of the cross, and all on active service. Every converted man is to teach what he knows; all those who have drunk of the living water are to become fountains out of which shall flow rivers of living water. We shall never get back to the grand old times of conquest until we get back to the old method of "all at it." In proportion as we come, in any one church, to individual service; nobody dreaming of doing his work by deputy, but each one serving God for himself; in that proportion, under the blessing of God, we shall come back to the old success.

Observe, next, that *there were no professional exceptions.* Philip is mentioned as going down to Samaria to preach; but Philip was originally set apart to attend to the distribution of the alms of the church. It is good for every man to attend to his own special office; but where that office ceases to be needful, let him get to that work which is common and constant. The time had come when there was no need for the deacon to sit in the vestry, for the poor people were all scattered. What does the deacon do? As the work to which he was appointed has come to an end, he keeps to the work for which every Christian is appointed, and he proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ. No one of us, then, can be exempted from the work of spreading the gospel because we are engaged in some other work. Good as it is, though it may be very intimately connected with the kingdom of Christ, yet it does not exonerate us from the work of endeavouring to bring sinners to Christ in some way or other. Stephen, the deacon, began first to bear testimony; and when he died, Philip, the next on the roll, stepped into his place. One soldier falls, and another steps forward. All are to proclaim the word, and no one is exempted by another form of service. Oh, that the Lord's people everywhere would note this!

Observe that there were *no educational or literary exceptions.* It is thought nowadays that a man must not try to proclaim the gospel, unless he has had a good education. To try and preach Christ, and yet to commit grammatical blunders, is looked upon as a grave offence. People are mightily offended at the idea of the gospel being properly preached by an uneducated man. This I believe to be a very injurious mistake. There is nothing whatsoever in the whole compass of Scripture to excuse any mouth from speaking for Jesus when the heart is really acquainted with his salvation. We are not all called to "preach," in the new sense of the term, but we are all called to make Jesus known if we know him. Has the gospel ever been spread to any extent by men of high literary power? Look through the whole line of history, and see if it is so. Have the men of splendid eloquence been remarkable for winning souls? I could quote names that stand first in the roll of oratory, which are low down in the roll of soul-winners. Those whom God has most honoured have been

men who, whatever their gifts, have consecrated them to God; and have earnestly declared the great truths of God's Word. Men who have been terribly in earnest, and have faithfully described man's ruin by sin, and God's remedy of grace—men who have warned sinners to escape from the wrath to come by believing in the Lord Jesus—these have been useful. If they had great gifts, they were no detriment to them; if they had few talents, this did not disqualify them. It has pleased God to use the base things of this world, and things that are despised, for the accomplishment of his great purposes of love. Paul declared that he proclaimed the gospel, "not with wisdom of words." He feared what might happen if he used worldly rhetoric, and therefore he refused the wisdom of words. We have need to do so now with emphasis. Let us trust in the divine energy of the Holy Ghost, and speak the truth in reliance upon his might, whether we can speak fluently with Apollos, or are slow of speech, like Moses. I say, then, to you, my dear friend, who unhappily may be lacking in education, do not therefore stay your testimony to our Lord. Rescue the perishing. What if you are not a great theologian! If you understand the plan of salvation you are sufficiently instructed to be a good witness for your Lord. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may make you such! A smith can shoe a horse, though he has never studied astronomy. He might be none the worse smith if he were familiar with the stars; but I fail to see that he would be much the better as a smith. Warn men to escape from the wrath to come, and believe in Jesus; and you can do this just as well though no science has puzzled you.

As there were no exceptions on account of educational defects, so were there *no exclusions on account of sex*. Men and women were to spread abroad the knowledge of Jesus. We read that, "As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men *and women* committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad" (and these must have been men *and woman*) "went everywhere preaching the word." There are many ways in which women can fittingly proclaim the word of the Lord, and in some of these they can proclaim it more efficiently than men. There are minds that will be attracted by the tender, plaintive, winning manner in which the sister in Christ expresses herself. A Christian mother! What a minister is she to her family! A Christian woman in single life—in the family circle, or even in domestic service—what may she not accomplish, if her heart be warm with love to her Saviour! We cannot say to the women, "Go home, there is nothing for *you* to do in the service of the Lord." Far from it, we entreat Martha and Mary, Lydia and Dorcas, and all the elect sisterhood, young and old, rich and poor, to instruct others as God instructs them. Young men and maidens, old men and matrons, yes, and boys and girls who love the Lord, should speak well of Jesus, and make known his salvation from day to day.

You see, dear friends, how the Lord gave to all his people the holy work of making Jesus known to men. How well they carried it out! Within a hundred years after the death of our Lord, his name had been made known to all the known world. But I do not know how many

years it will take to make Christ known at the rate of our present movement. A few men are set apart for missionaries, and directed with complicated machinery, and good people feel easy about the heathen. I find no fault with what is done; but my fault is that we are not doing a hundred times as much in ways more spontaneous. If the church of God should once wake up, it will be as the sea when it returns to its strength after a long ebb. The Lord send it—send it now! But he will only bless the world in his own way; and one of his conditions is that the whole church should move. We must come back to the primitive custom: every Christian must be a herald of the cross.

II. Secondly, having asked you to notice the universality of the work, will you please to notice THE NATURALNESS OF IT. That word "therefore," at the commencement of the fourth verse, says a great deal to me. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word"—as if it followed as a sort of natural consequence, that being scattered they went everywhere preaching the word. Does not this show us that *they could not think of following any other course?* They that were scattered might have said, "Clearly our duty is to hold our tongues; we have got into great trouble at Jerusalem because we preached Christ. We must now look to our own safety, and the comfort of our families; and in these foreign countries we had better live godly lives, and go to heaven on the sly, but we need not again expose ourselves to the dangers of persecution." They did not thus argue. It is not said, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad slunk away, and held their tongues." No, they never thought of that.

We do not find that they even said, "This gospel of ours is evidently not in accord with the spirit of the age. The scribes and Pharisees all differ from us, and we must endeavour to win them by altering our tone." They did not dream of cutting off the angles of truth, nor of inserting pleasant fragments of popular thought to please the powers that be; but they set forth "the word" in its pure simplicity, and the cross of Christ, which is an offence to so many. They never said, "The old gospel did very well when Jesus was here; but you see he has gone, and circumstances alter cases, and alter gospels, and we had better adapt our teaching to the period." They did not so, because of the fear of the Lord. They did not endeavour to mend the gospel, but they went everywhere proclaiming it. They preached the word as they received it; they set forth the kingdom as their King had revealed it. Ah, dear friends! if you are true to the Lord Jesus Christ you have to spread the gospel somehow, and it must be the old, old gospel. You must not dare to think of denying the light to those around you. Would you leave men to perish for lack of knowledge? Dare you have their blood on your skirts?

These persecuted ones "went everywhere preaching the word." Why was it so natural to them to do it? *Their obligations pressed upon them.* They each one of them said, "I have been saved, and I must see others saved. I am bound to tell of the blood of Jesus, and its power to wash away sin. The curses of the ages will fall upon me, and the wails of lost souls will come up into my ears as long as I exist, if I do not make known the gospel." Brethren

God's way of saving the unconverted is through his church; and if the church neglects its work, who is to do it? Our Lord means to bring in the rest of his chosen through those who are already called; but if these start aside and are untrue to their calling, how is the work to be done? I know the work is of God alone; still he uses instruments. If you do not tell the gospel, you are leaving your fellow-men to perish. Yonder is the wreck, and you are not sending out the life-boat! Yonder are souls starving, and you give them no bread! Well, if you are resolved to be thus inhuman, at least know what you are doing. You that are taking no share in this great work of spreading the gospel are wilfully allowing men to go down to hell, and their blood will be required at your hands. These first believers dared not incur such guilt, and therefore away they went preaching the word.

I think, too, that *their wonderment compelled them.* They had seen the man Christ Jesus, and they had communed with him. They had beheld his Godhead in his miracles, and they had adored. They had seen him nailed to the cross; they had, many of them, beheld him alive after he was risen from the dead, and they could not help telling out so great a marvel. Here was God come down among men. Here was the Redeemer of men suffering to the death to rescue men from eternal ruin; and they could not help telling abroad this miracle of love. They were like children, who, when they hear a bit of startling news, must tell it. Good men that they were, their wonderment and their joy were equal, and they could not hold their peace. When ancient believers were shut up in prison, they began to sing the gospel until the prisoners heard them. They had something to sing about, and they must sing it. If they took them out of the temple by force, behold, the moment the prison doors were opened, they were found standing in the same place telling the same story. If you and I felt that blessed amazement which we ought to feel when we think of free grace and dying love, silence would be impossible.

The principal reason for their constant proclamation of Jesus was, that *they were in a fine state of spiritual health.* They went everywhere preaching the word when scattered abroad, because they had told it out when at home. You will never make a missionary of the person who does no good at home. If you do not seek souls in your own street, you will not do so in Hindostan. If you are of no use in Whitechapel, you will be of no use on the Congo. He that will not serve the Lord in the Sunday-school at home, will not win children to Christ in China. Distance lends no real enchantment to Christian service. You who do nothing now, are not fit for the war, for you are in sad health. The Lord give you spiritual health and vigour, and then you will want no pressing, but you will cry at once, "Here am I; send me!" O my friends, go at once to your families, to your workshops, and declare the name of Jesus! Oh, for more spiritual life! This is the root of the matter. If we were living more fully in the power of the Holy Spirit, our witness would be borne without constraint; it would be as natural to us to spread the gospel as to breathe. We should be under holy impulses which would demand our witness-bearing; for if we could not speak the word of the Lord, it would be

as fire in our bones; we should become weary with withholding. Lord, give us this spiritual life more and more!

Surely also *the times must have urged them onward*, to go with hurried step as messengers for Christ; for Jerusalem was soon to be destroyed. This made them quick in their movements, that the last warning might come to all their countrymen. You know what the times are now! I am no prophet; but as we read, week by week, the appalling crimes that are chronicled by the press, if ever Christian men should be in earnest they should be in earnest now. All the signs of the times arouse us to look for the coming of our Lord. No token tends to quiet us, but all to awaken us. We must work at double quick rate; and if any one among us has done nothing at all, it is time for him, as a good servant, to gird up his loins, to work and to watch, "for in such an hour as he thinks not the Son of man cometh." I have been praying all the while that I have been speaking this morning; yes, praying more than preaching, that God may distinctly lay his hand on every brother and sister in this place, and constrain you to proclaim this gospel of Jesus in every place to which you can go.

III. Thirdly, carefully notice THE JOYFULNESS OF THIS WORK. "They were scattered abroad"; but as "they went everywhere preaching the word," the calamity became a blessing. Their work took the sting out of their banishment. The housewife had to leave her comfortable little home, and tramp to a strange country: the man of business had to sell his stock, and quit his position. Those were hard times beyond question. Fancy that happening to us! What distress would spread over this congregation if you had to run for your lives! But then they said to themselves, "It is all right; for as we live to spread abroad the knowledge of Jesus, we shall do this wherever we go. Our flight shall be a mission." This changed the aspect of affairs. By the persecution they received express marching orders to quit home and take to foreign service. Was not this a comfort? For myself, I always like to know the Lord's will clearly. Suspense kills me. If I have any question about what my course should be, I am worried more than I can tell. Even distress is a relief when it shuts you up to one course. Persecution became both a direction as to their course and an occasion for getting to work. As they must go elsewhere, they would talk of salvation by faith in Jesus to the people among whom they might be called to sojourn, and so tell out the story of redemption to people who were totally ignorant thereof. This made them feel it was a good thing after all that they were scattered abroad. Dear friends, if your heart is set on a purpose, and there comes a crash which spoils your comfort, you hardly lament it if it subserves your chief design in life. If you are possessed with the idea that you, as a Christian, must live only to serve Christ, and to win souls, then anything which happens, however painful, will be welcomed if it places you in a better position for your holy life-work. That is the better place in which you can serve the Lord better. So that the tried people of God at Jerusalem must have felt devoutly comforted as they saw that God was helping them to answer the great purpose of their lives, and was pushing them forward by pushing them out.

Their exile would be a help in gaining attention; for when they

came to a place, the people would enquire, "Why are these Jews coming here?" And the answer would be, that they had been forced from home because they believed in one Jesus, who was called Christ, who had died for men, so that by faith in him they might be saved. For love of this Saviour they had been driven from their native land. The people may not have thought them wise, but doubtless they would be interested in their story, and thus made aware of their faith. Curiosity would ask of yonder Jewess, "How came you to be here, Naomi." And Naomi would tell the story of the crucified Saviour. "And you, Benjamin, what drove you from Palestine?" He, too, would have to narrate the life and death of the Nazarene, and so Jesus would be made known. Persecution thus opened men's minds to enquire, and served the purpose of advertising the gospel. Thus the Lord set up pulpits for his servants wherever they went, and provided congregations for them. What Satan intended for evil the Lord turned for good. What better could have happened than for all these holy men and women to be driven abroad to disseminate the ever blessed word? This, as they thought of it, made them bear their exile without repining. An all-absorbing purpose turned sorrow into joy. I cannot conceive of anything so calculated to reconcile them to their banishment as the prospect of glorifying God the more. The martyr spirit is just the spirit of witness-bearing overcoming all love of self and even care for life.

Moreover, as they told the story, and it made their own hearts glow with holy fire, their spirits were refreshed, and their souls made glad. Jesus seemed still to be near them: yes, he was with them. They found the surest remedy for their grief in his sacred fellowship: nay, the grief itself became gladness. If you want to get rid of low spirits, preach the gospel. To take Christ's yoke is to find rest unto your souls. If you are in the very dust, go and tell a weary one of salvation by Jesus: you will thus raise yourself, even if your message be rejected. Here is a balm, which, while it heals the wound to which it is applied, also perfumes the hand which applies it. The exiles were made to feel at home when they saw God working with them in Greece and Rome, even as he had done in Jerusalem.

I may add that, if they were led to see that they were now made like their Lord in suffering, they would have comfort in that fact. If they now remembered what he said concerning the grain of wheat, which must be cast into the ground and die, or it could not bring forth fruit, they would now feel that they were having fellowship with him in his sufferings. This was enough to make them a happy body of men and women. They were scattered, but not saddened. Theirs was not the scattering of a retreat, but of an advance all along the line; and so it yielded them joy, and not distress. I entreat you, try active service as a solace for sorrow.

IV. Notice, fourthly, THE SUPREMACY OF THIS WORK. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." I suppose they did something for a living. I do not know what their handicrafts might be; but each one had a calling, and followed it industriously. We are not told what they did. It is incidentally

mentioned, further on in history, that the apostle Paul made tents: but you never read anywhere in the Bible that Paul went everywhere tent making. He did make tents, but that was not his vocation; his business was to save souls. He made tents, in order that he might not be chargeable to the people; but winning souls was Paul's business. The scattered did not go abroad for the purpose of trade. They did not say, "We will go to such a place, because there we can make the best profits"; but they chose their way with the one purpose of spreading the gospel. To preach Christ was their one vocation which, like Aaron's rod, swallowed up all other rods. Proclaiming Christ was their one purpose, passion, and profession: all else might go. I wonder how many Christian people here could have their biographies condensed into this line, "He lived to make Christ known." Might it not be said of one, he lived to open a shop, and then to open a second? or of another, he lived to save a good deal of money, and take shares in limited liability companies? or of a third, he lived to paint a great picture? or of a fourth, he was best known for his genial hospitality? Of many a minister it might be said—he lived to preach splendid sermons, and to gain credit for fine oratory. What of all these? If it can be said of a man, "He lived to glorify Christ," then his life is a life. Every Christian man ought so to live. Oh that my memorial might be: "He preached Christ crucified"! You fall short of your design in life if Jesus is not as much your object as he is your confidence. Make your tents, sell your goods, paint your pictures if you will; but do all this in order that you may fulfil your higher and truer life, for which you were bought with blood, and quickened by the Spirit of God.

We note the supremacy of this work, not only because it swallowed up all their trades, but because it *obliterated all trace of caste.* See Philip. He is a Jew, but he goes to Samaria. "Philip, what made you go to Samaria? Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Brethren, when it comes to preaching Christ we have dealings with everybody—Jews, Turks, infidels, cannibals. The Jew goes to Samaria for Christ, and the Samaritans accept the Messiah of the Jews. Anon Philip is called down south to journey along a desert way, and there he meets an Ethiopian, probably a black man. Ah well! white men were not particularly anxious for the company of Ethiopians, but Philip gets up into his chariot, and rides with him. Black and white make a fine mixture when the book of the prophet Isaiah lies between them. What a beautiful picture this would make! Philip and the eunuch riding together reading of the Lord Jesus in the Hebrew prophets. All the paltry differences of sect, politics, nationalities and races go to the winds as soon as we are possessed with a desire to win souls. "Oh, but they are so dirty!" Let us show them how they can be cleansed. "But the slum is so foul!" Yet for the love of Jesus we will enter it to carry his saving health among the people.

What is more, we shall not only be willing to work for the poor and fallen, but we shall *work with them.* You, a person of taste and culture, will join hands with the illiterate worker, and while you are half amused at his blunders, you will be charmed by his zeal. You will not despise him, but you may even feel humbled as you see how,

with less knowledge than yourself, he often shows more spiritual wisdom and energy. You will take a brotherly pride in such a man. Caste is gone when Christ is come. Oh, that we might feel the supremacy of our holy service more and more! Christ must be made known; sinners must be saved; heaven must be filled; and before these necessities everything else must be as nothing. Are you not of this mind?

See, also, the supremacy of their purpose, in the fact that *they were willing to be at the beck and call of the Holy Spirit*, and to go anywhere. Philip was getting on splendidly at Samaria, and the church grew under his care. Surely he ought to stop there, he is evidently the man for the place! But he does not stop there. Philip has a call, not to a larger church, but to the road through the desert, and away he goes to talk to one person. The genuine soul-winner has his inward directions, and he follows the guidance of the Spirit of God. Here, there, anywhere, everywhere he goes, where the hope of conversions tempts him. When a sportsman goes out after game, he does not know which way he will go, neither does he bind himself in that matter. If he is deer-stalking, he may have to go up the mountain side, or down the glen, across the burn, or away among the heather. Where his sport leads him, he follows; and so it is with the genuine soul-winner: he leaves himself free to follow his one object. He does not know where he is going, but he does know what he is going after. He lays himself out for the winning of souls for Jesus. On the railway he speaks to any one who happens to be put in the same carriage; or in the shop he looks out for opportunities to impress a customer. He sows beside all waters, and in all soils. He carries his gun at half-cock, ready to take aim at once. That is the man whom God is likely to bless.

Note yet one thing more: the supremacy of this work was seen in the fact that these good people *were quite willing to subside*. Philip has done a great work at Samaria, but he sends for the apostles Peter and John to come down from Jerusalem. Some few earnest workers have been impatient of discipline, but the best of them are the most orderly people in the world. Some brethren are just as ready to obey church authority as if they were the least of all saints, instead of being the most successful of the brotherhood. It is not well when our Philips are too big to work in connection with the mother-church. I have never found them so. The idle are troublesome; the laborious are loving. Philip turns into nobody just as readily as before he had been everybody. Peter and John come upon the scene, and seem, as it were, to run away with his laurels; but Philip makes no complaint, for in fact there were no laurels for any of them; all the glory was given to Jesus. Whether it were Philip, or Peter, or John, the Lord alone was magnified. Blessed is that man who knows how to subside. Oh, that there were thousands of workers of this kind willing to come to the front, and lead the way, and just as willing to step aside, if thereby the cause might advance!

V. Thus have I brought this matter before you, and I shall now beg you to observe THE SPECIALITY OF THIS WORK. I have shown you its universality, its naturalness, its joyfulness, and its supremacy; and now we will dwell upon its speciality. Philip is set before us as a

specimen of those who were scattered abroad. A sample shows the whole. What did Philip make prominent? "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached *Christ* unto them." That is all he had to preach, he preached the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. But when Philip had to instruct an educated nobleman, did he dwell on the same subject as that which he brought before common Samaritans? Read the thirty-fifth verse. "Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him *Jesus*." Here we have the same subject as before: to the Samaritans Christ, to the Ethiopian Jesus. See, then, what we have to do. We have to tell over and over again what we know so well, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. The Saviour lived here a life of holy obedience, and then died, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." We preach that this Jesus made atonement for sin, so that whosoever believeth in him hath eternal life, and shall never come into condemnation. We declare that Jesus rose again, and that this new life he bestows on those who trust him; that he has gone into heaven to take possession of the inheritance for his people, and to plead for them before the throne; and that those who are in him shall one day be with him and behold his glory. In a word, we preach Jesus as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

This is the old, old story. It is a very simple story, but the telling of it will save the people. Keep to that gospel. Many have lost faith in it. It is hoped that people will now be saved by new socialistic arrangements, by moral precepts, by amusements, by societies, and what not. Let the church of God be glad when anything is done which helps temperance, purity, freedom, and so forth; but *her* one business is to preach Christ. Stick to this, my brethren. If all the shoemakers in London were to take to making bracelets for the Queen, she would be badly decorated; but where should we be? Let the cobblers stick to their lasts. You that are sent to preach Christ, if you take to doing something else, and become philosophical, socialistic, philanthropic, and all that, what is to become of the spiritual nature of men? Keep you to your work. Go and preach Christ to the people. I have not lost faith in the old gospel. No; my confidence in it grows as I see the speedy failure of all the quackeries of succeeding years. The methods of the modern school are a bottle of smoke. Christ crucified is the only remedy for sin. Keep to the gospel of "believe and live." "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." If this gospel does not uplift the race, nothing will. This is the only medicine which the great Physician has given to us to administer to sin-sick souls. Keep to it. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." We want no advance, we dream of no improvement upon the gospel.

In closing, I would call your attention to two little words in the fifth verse. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ," allow me to put the next two words in capitals—"UNTO THEM." Read the thirty-fifth verse. "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached UNTO HIM Jesus."

Somebody said to Mr. Moody—"How are we to get at the masses?" He replied, "Go for them." The expression is forcible, "Go for them." Go for them in the name of Christ. Go right at them. Do not only preach Christ, but preach Christ *unto them.* Preach Jesus to the individual man. It is the work of the church of God, as much as lieth in us, to bring Christ home to the people's knowledge, thought, belief, conscience, and heart. Preach it *unto them.* If I stand here and preach *before* you, what is the good of it? but if I preach *unto* you, there is practical use in it. When you go out of this place, I pray you to look out your man or your woman, and speak unto him or unto her Jesus the Christ. Come to close dealings. I fear that some of you fathers have not yet prayed with your boys, and some of you mothers have not yet taken your girls apart, and talked with them about eternal things. Have you? You say, "I am so retiring." Then retire, and pray; but love your children enough to speak to them of Jesus. You sisters, have you spoken to your brothers about Jesus? Have some of you wives yet spoken to your ungodly husbands about the Christ? This is the point. If we will each one speak for our Lord, we shall see results that will perfectly astound us. If, during the next few months, this church would fully wake up, and if every member would feel, "I have something to do, and I must do it," we should then see a glorious harvest. When my brethren Fullerton and Smith hold special services in this place, as they will do in the beginning of November, you will help to get in the people, and to crowd the place; and when they preach, you will pray and watch, and look up the enquirers, and we shall have great times. If you will go after people at their houses, and give them your own personal testimony in loving earnestness, the Holy Spirit will bless you. Oh, may God arouse us to this! I say again, I have not preached this morning half so much as I have prayed. For every word that I have spoken I have prayed two words silently to God. Oh, that the Lord would hear me, and bless us in an unusual degree! If the Lord will fill you with his Spirit, the opening of yonder front doors and your going out will be like the bursting of a bomb-shell in London. If you are all in earnest, your existence will be like the shining of the sun in the heavens. Oh, how I long that God may be glorified! For his truth's sake I have been "abundantly filled with reproach"; but I would gladly accept a sevenfold baptism of it so that his kingdom would come. May the Lord make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the people! Amen, and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts viii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—100 (Vers. II.), 484, 331.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FURTHER AFIELD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 23RD, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."—Acts xiii. 46—48.

DEAR friends, last Sabbath morning I tried to stir you up to sacred activity. I heard from many that they felt thoroughly aroused, and I know of some who at once commenced to speak for Christ. I wish I could hope that our whole company kept step together in this. If what is said on the Sabbath were really carried out, what splendid advances we should make! But if not, it is as though a commanding officer spoke to his troop, and the men did not march according to orders. However, I am thankful for what was done, and for the many of you who did keep step together in an earnest march to conquer the powers of sin by making known the gospel of Jesus Christ. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word," and I hope that you, as you scattered to your various abodes, did go everywhere teaching the word of God according to your capacity. If so, you have already come far enough to have met with individuals upon whom your warnings and invitations have been spent in vain. I thought it would be well for us this morning to go with Paul to Antioch, in Pisidia, and just see how he was treated there, and what he did when he met with an ill reception from the Jews, that we might not be discouraged if our message has been refused, but that we might be instructed by the example of Paul and Barnabas as to what we should do; and be comforted by the success which their perseverance achieved.

The Jews of Antioch, after having heard Paul with considerable attention, made up their minds to refuse Jesus, the Son of David, and not to accept him as their Messiah and Saviour.

I. Our first point for consideration will be that THE REJECTION OF CHRIST IS A VERY SOLEMN BUSINESS. It has been a very solemn business for the Jewish nation. The history of the Jews. since their

rejection of our Lord, may be written in blood and tears. No Gentile should read it without ten thousand blushes, for they have been evil entreated by all the nations, though through them the greatest blessing that ever came to men has come to us. Never should we forget that our Redeemer is of the seed of Israel. Yet, when the chosen people rejected Jesus deliberately, from that day a history of woe and sorrow began, which has gone on even to this day. To the deep disgrace of Christendom, so called, there still remain countries in which they regard a Jew's life as of less value than that of a dog, and only force holds them back from massacre. They are still a people scattered and peeled in many parts of the earth, although in others they take the lead in wealth. Oh, that they had received the Messiah! I shall not attempt to picture what would have been their history if they had accepted the Son of David as their Lord. It is not so.

> "Oh, would our God to Zion turn!
> God with salvation clad,
> Then Judah's harp should music learn,
> And Israel be glad."

I am bound to talk about a people nearer home, about some here present, who have refused the Saviour. Perhaps they will say, at the very outset, "We have not done so, we will receive him one day." Yes, but you refuse him *now*. If you do not now believe in him, you have up till now rejected him.

This you have done as they did at Antioch, *against the evidence of honest men*. They doubted whether Christ had really risen from the dead, although his resurrection was attested by hundreds of true witnesses. His rising from the dead was a great miracle; but if he did not rise from the dead we have a far greater wonder to account for. Why did these hundreds of persons declare themselves to be eye-witnesses of his rising? Those who declared that they had seen him alive after his crucifixion, how came they to agree in such a statement, and to persist in it so unanimously? They were simple folk, who had associated with Jesus for years; and they identified him, after his rising, as the same person who died. They were not ingenious enough to have invented such a story. They could have no object in spreading the statement if they had not believed it, for they suffered for it. They were not gainers in any form, except as to spiritual things. They were thrust into prison, and scourged, and banished, and most of them were slain for bearing this witness. Some of them died by deaths too cruel to be described; but they none of them ever recanted, or admitted that they might be mistaken. Hundreds of witnesses asserted that this Jesus, whom they saw dead upon the cross, did really rise again; and their belief of this fact filled them with a burning enthusiasm, which, while it produced in them a holy character, also caused them to speak with a marvellous boldness and full assurance which amazed their adversaries. They spoke earnestly, like men who felt that it was their life's work to bear witness to a divine fact. But the unbelievers set aside the testimony of these honest men. My unconverted hearer, if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the work which was crowned by his rising from

the dead, you set aside the witness of apostles, saints, and martyrs. The number of martyrs has been very great from that day till now, but you set aside the testimony borne by their lives and death. You also impute foolishness or deceit to your dearest friends, some of whom are with God, and who died in the faith, exhorting you to believe in Jesus Christ. Indeed, you make all of us who preach the gospel to be liars; and we are not so; neither do you think so badly of us when we speak in every-day life. We tell you glorious things, which we have tasted and handled, of the good word of God. We speak out of our experience of the power of Christ's blood, when we pray you to accept his atoning sacrifice, and yield yourselves to him. We have no motive in persuading you to faith but that of love to your souls. We shall not be gainers by your conversion, nor losers by your ruin; but we love you, and therefore pray you to believe those necessary truths, without which you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.

These people next *did violence to Christ himself and his precious blood.* It does seem amazing to those of us who love Jesus and worship him that any should reject him. He comes so tenderly, so meekly, the Lamb of God! All that he does is so generous, so self-denying, that we marvel that you refuse him. "He taketh away the sin of the world"; why does the world despise him? What has he done that you should refuse to become his disciples and accept his salvation? Do you not know that you do despite to his blood? To me there is a great sanctity about the blood of man. I saw last Wednesday the Prayer-book which Bishop Juxon held in his hand as he stood by the side of Charles I. on the scaffold at Whitehall. Two spots of blood are on the page wherein he was reading the prayers, as the axe fell upon the monarch's neck. I have no reverence for Charles I., but I have reverence for drops of blood. I looked at them, and they were no theme of jest for me: the blood of a man is sacred. But what shall I say of the blood of the Son of God! God himself, incarnate, in some mysterious manner taking into union with himself our humanity, and then shedding his blood to redeem us! What is to be said of this? Look with reverence upon that precious blood. Can you think that this blood was shed to wash away sin, and yet trifle with it, and go your way to your farm and to your merchandise, forgetful altogether of this amazing sacrifice? God grant that you may not be guilty of the blood of Christ! It is an enormous guilt, and it lies on every unbeliever who has heard of Jesus, and has rejected his great salvation.

These people had *to do despite to all the marvels which lie wrapped up in the gospel.* To us, my dear hearers, who believe in Jesus, the gospel is the most wonderful thing that can ever be. The more we know of it, the more astounded we are at it. It is a compound of divine and infinite things. When we study it, we go from wonder to wonder. Here we behold the heart of God, and hear the voice of his infinite tenderness, his infallible wisdom, his stern justice, and his supreme beneficence. How can all this be rejected by you? Surely, you do not know what is in the gospel, or you would hearken to its every tone. I sat yesterday with two tubes in my ears to listen to sounds that came from revolving cylinders of wax. I heard music,

though I knew that no instrument was near. It was music which had been caught up months before, and now was ringing out as clearly and distinctly in my ears as it could have done had I been present at its first sound. I heard Mr. Edison speak: he repeated a childish ditty; and when he had finished he called upon his friends to repeat it with him; and I heard many American voices joining in that repetition. That wax cylinder was present when these sounds were made, and now it talked it all out in my ear. Then I heard Mr. Edison at work in his laboratory: he was driving nails, and working on metal, and doing all sorts of things, and calling for this and that with that American tone which made one know his nationality. I sat and listened, and I felt lost in the mystery. But what of all this? What can these instruments convey to us? But oh, to sit and listen to the gospel when your ears are really opened! Then you hear God himself at work; you hear Jesus speak: you hear his voice in suffering and in glory, and you rise up and say, "I never thought to have heard such strange things! Where have I been to be so long deaf to this? How could I neglect a gospel in which are locked up such wondrous treasures of wisdom and knowledge, such measureless depths of love and grace?" In the gospel of the Lord Jesus, God speaks into the ear of his child more music than all the harps of heaven can yield. I pray you, do not despise it. Be not such dull, driven cattle that, when God has set before you what angels desire to look into, you close your eyes to such glories, and pay attention to the miserable trifles of time and sense.

This rejection of the gospel of Christ is the more grievous because *it is a decided act of the will.* When a man refuses to be saved it is his own act and deed. Nothing in Scripture will support us in throwing the blame elsewhere. The devil himself cannot refuse Christ for a man; he must do *that* for himself. Only yourself can bolt the door against yourself. There is a will in man, and it is a sadly perverse will, so that the Saviour said of it, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." The not coming of which the Lord complains is a direct act of the man's own will. You choose to sin; you choose to remain uncleansed from guilt; you choose to abide under the wrath of God. You have deliberately chosen to be without Christ for years; and therein you are choosing your own destruction. This is a fearful thing. It made me feel, when I was preparing my discourse, as if I must spend all the time over this first head; for I cannot willingly leave a single soul to be of the number of whom it is written, "Ye put it from you." How can we bear to see you thus commit soul-suicide?

Notice! We have here the rejection of Christ regarded as *a man's own verdict upon himself.* No man can claim a fairer jury than to let his own faculties sit in judgment upon himself. Listen! "Ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life." This, then, is your own verdict, you who refuse the gospel. You have not yielded to Christ, and you are not saved; and thus you have "judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life." In the legal sense there is no worthiness in any man. Our conscious unworthiness is our only worthiness for mercy, and that consciousness is wrought in us by grace. But in

looking the whole thing up and down, you have felt hitherto that you were not the men to believe in Christ, you were not the women to be saved. You felt rather that you were the kind of people who should spend your zeal in attending the theatre or the dance. You felt that you best answered the end of your being when you did your daily labour, or opened your shop and saved a little money; but that you were not called upon to think of more high and heavenly things. You judged yourselves worthy to live a temporary life, and then, like beasts, to die and be no more; but an eternal destiny of glory and immortality you have not judged yourselves worthy to obtain. Remember, this is your own verdict upon yourself. If your verdict had run, "I am an immortal being, I shall outlive the sun and moon, and I would therefore be prepared for my supreme destiny, and I can only be so prepared by linking myself with the eternal Son of God, who, as the chief of men, shows us our manhood united to the Godhead, and gives those who are in him to rejoice in God their Father," this would have led you to lofty aspirations. This conclusion you have not arrived at, but you have brought in the verdict, "unworthy of eternal life"; which, being interpreted, means—worthy to die. I fear that your verdict will have to stand. How terrible will it be when the Lord will set his seal to your own judgment, and say: "You are unworthy of eternal life: this is your own judgment upon yourself. You were not willing to be quickened into spiritual life; you shall remain in eternal death"! It will be hell to a man to have his own voluntary choice confirmed, and made unchangeable. Oh, that this judgment may not fall upon you! O sirs, I dread above all things that throughout eternity you will be left to your own free wills, to continue in that condition of alienation from God which you have chosen, reaping what you have sowed! If you deliberately prefer sin to Christ, and let go pardon, everlasting life, and heaven, who is to blame? Will you not curse yourselves to all eternity? and will not this be hell?

Once more: this sad, this wretched putting from them of everlasting life, *greatly grieves the Spirit of God.* Paul and Barnabas were moved by it to speak in deep solemnity. In those godly men the Spirit of God largely dwelt, and in them he revealed his thoughts. They had come to Antioch in pure love to souls; and they had hoped better things of their countrymen than to see them reject the Saviour. As an audience, they had been most attentive while Paul recited the history of Israel, and he and Barnabas hoped that many would have believed on the Son of David; and when they found that the frequenters of the synagogue had become envious and jealous because the Gentiles were so eager to hear the Word, then Paul and Barnabas were grievously wounded. The Spirit of God is much more tender than the soul of Paul or Barnabas, and he is sorely grieved when he sees Jesus rejected. It is his office to win for Jesus the love of men, and he is vexed when men turn their backs on the loving Lord. What must the Holy Spirit have to bear from the multitudes of men and women who are putting the gospel away from them! In no one case is it a trifle to him, but in every instance he is grieved, even as of old it was written: "They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit." O gracious

Spirit of God, still bear with wayward men! We beseech thee, still have pity upon the ungodly, for madness is in their hearts. Still enlighten their darkness, and melt the hardness of their hearts, for Jesus' sake.

There stands the case; they put everlasting life from them, and judged themselves unworthy of it. What an unhappy state of things! It is too painful for me. I cannot speak longer upon it: I must hasten to my second point.

II. This rejection of Christ by some led to a more extended effort. When Paul and Barnabas found that their message was rejected, what did they do? They met the Jews with this bold sentence, "Seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

In consequence of the ill-manners of the Jews *they did not turn away from their work.* It never entered their minds to give up their ministry because it did not succeed among these Jews. They did not say, "Lo, we turn away from preaching Jesus: we will speak no more in the name of the Lord." Neither, my brethren, may we speak thus. I know the heart grows sick when tender testimony is rejected. The constant reiteration of the same gospel, to ears that will not hear, becomes wearisome work. It needs great faith to go on from day to day ploughing a rock. Oh, shall we always have to cry to you in vain! Will you always be so perverse? Yet we dare not cease to plead with you. We cannot give you up. We overcome the suggestion of our weariness, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord." For love of you the gospel is as fire in our bones, and we cannot cease to warn every man, and plead with every man for Jesus.

Instead of turning from the work, these holy men *addressed themselves to those who had been somewhat neglected:* "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Beloved, if you have been mainly labouring with the children of godly parents, and these refuse, turn you to the slum children. If you have tried to bless respectable people, and they remain unsaved, try those who are not respectable. If those to whom it was natural and necessary that the word should first be spoken, have put it from them, turn to those who have hitherto been left out in the cold. Take the Lord's hint in this apostolic history, and distinctly turn to those people who are not yet gospel hardened. Turn to those who have not been brought up under religious influences, but have been looked upon as without the pale. That, I believe, is the Lord's mind towards the church of to-day. Let her break up fresh soil, and she will have richer harvests. Let her open new mines, and she shall find rare riches. We too often preach within a little circle where the message of life has already been rejected scores of times. Let us not spend all our time in knocking at doors from which we have been repulsed, let us try elsewhere. During this new week, and throughout the rest of our lives, let us seek after the neglected, the utterly irreligious, the worldly and profane. Start not: I mean just what I say. Let the infidel and the superstitious be the object of our prayers; let the frivolous and worldly be spoken with. This seems to me to be the parallel of Paul's conduct when he turned to the Gentiles, who were given up to idols and served divers lusts, and were viewed as quite beyond the line of grace.

They enlarged the scope of their ministry under divine command. They said, "We turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us." Their change of aim was not a freak of fancy. If you now turn your chief thoughts to the most neglected part of the community, you will have this as your warrant, "So hath the Lord commanded us." It was right to begin with chapel-goers, and church-goers, and those instructed in the faith: it was necessary to begin with the children of the godly; but if they put it from them, and count themselves unworthy of eternal life, it is now imperative upon us that we look after others. O my brethren, let us try to do so! Let us turn our energies towards getting in the people who are not familiar with the courts of the Lord's house, nor with the gospel of his Son, for so hath the Lord commanded us.

There is this happy, and yet unhappy, circumstance to urge us on —*the outsiders are by far the larger number.* What were the Jews in number as compared with the Gentiles? If you work for Christ among those who are in our religious circles, and fail to win them, the field is the world, and the larger part of that field has never been touched as yet. We have laboured for London; but if London counts itself unworthy of eternal life, let us think of Calcutta, Canton, and the Congo. If these near ones will not reward our endeavours, let us be of enterprising spirit, and do as traders do, who, when they find no market at home, strike out new lines. This is precisely what the text would teach us. Let us launch out into the deep, and let down our nets for a draught. If we cannot catch fish in the shallows, great shoals of fish are in the deeps, and if we will launch out we shall come back with our boats loaded with the living freight.

The result of the rejection of Christ by some was the expansion of the sphere of the godly workers. It reminds us of the parable—they that were bidden were not worthy; therefore, go ye out into the highways and hedges, and as many as ye find bid to the supper.

III. Thirdly, please notice that THIS ENLARGEMENT OF EFFORT WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE PROMISE OF GOD. "For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

Let us notice this: *God has set Jesus to be a light, and a light he must be.* God's appointment is no empty thing. No man thinks of setting up a light if nobody will ever see it; and if God has appointed Christ to be a light, depend upon it some are to see that light. But all men are blind by nature. Alas! it is even so; but if God has set his Son to be a light, I conclude that he is about to open the eyes of the blind, that they may see this light. If I saw a wise man going into a blind asylum, laying on gas or making preparation for the electric light, I should feel sure that he had a view to people who can see; and if none but blind people could come into the building, I should conclude that he anticipated a time when the poor blind folks would find their eyes again, and would be able to use the light. So, as the Lord has set Jesus to be a light, you may be sure that he means to open blind eyes. Jesus will enlighten the people, souls will be saved. God has set his King upon the holy hill of Zion, and he has not set him there for a King without intending to give

him a kingdom. God will not allow his Son to be a Saviour who never saves, a Redeemer who does not redeem.

Our Lord *is set to enlighten every class.* The Jew no longer has a monopoly of the light of heaven. God has not appointed his Son to save a few dozen people who go to a particular meeting-house. He has set him to be a light to the nations, and he means he shall be so. This encourages us to labour among all classes. Jesus is a fit light for the upper ten thousand, and some of them shall rejoice in that light: he is equally set to be a light to the teeming millions, and they shall rejoice in him, too. What God has appointed must be carried out. Jesus is yet to be a light to outcast people—to the persons of whom we have never thought favourably, the classes whom even philanthropy has felt ready to abandon. This is God's set purpose concerning his Son Jesus, and his omnipotence will carry it out.

We are further told that *our Lord Jesus is set to be salvation.* Be you therefore sure that he will save. If Jesus is set for salvation, men shall be saved. Let us believe in Christ's power to save. We have only a spattering of faith in him. Why do you not talk of Jesus to that fellow who swears in the street? You say that it would be of no use. What is this but distrust of the gospel? Why do you not test the power of the glad tidings upon persons of bad character? Is it not that you think the gospel would be of no use in such a case? You think that some quarters of the town cannot be reached by the truth: thus you have a local Christianity—a God of the hills and not of the valleys—a religion in which the power varies according to longitude and latitude. God forgive our unbelief, and at the same time kill it!

The great Father has set Christ Jesus to be "*salvation unto the ends of the earth.*" So then, if any are further off than others, they are specially included. If any seem so far gone that they stand on the verge of creation, 'out of the reach of civilization and charity—these are the people whom Jesus is set to save. He can save to both ends of the earth, and all that lies in between. To the most debauched, depraved, drunken, and desperate, Jesus is set to be salvation. From that poverty which has been brought on by vice, and that degradation which is the consequence of sin, Jesus can uplift mankind. Where even the image of manhood seems obliterated, and the brute reigns supreme, the Lord Jesus can set the superscription of God. To the lost, Jesus is set to be a Saviour. The triumphs of the gospel at the first were largely among the lowest of the low. Slaves and outcasts embraced Christianity, and rose to holiness. It was by such that the Lord overthrew the idols of Greece and Rome. The Lord can work such wonders again, and he will. Only let us believe it, and tell out unceasingly the gospel of Jesus in the unlikeliest places, and the promise will be fulfilled—"I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

IV. Observe, in the fourth place, that THIS ENLARGEMENT OF EFFORT WAS ENCOURAGED BY SPEEDY SUCCESS: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many

as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region."

First, *the Gentiles were glad.* Could you not see their eyes sparkle as they learned that Jesus was their salvation? They sat in the synagogue, where they were only tolerated, the Jews looking very jealously at them; but now they heard good news, for the living God had thought of them and sent to them salvation. No more would they care for the dark eyes of the Jews; they smiled as they saw the door of grace set open before them. Paul and Barnabas must have felt glad to address so glad a congregation. We little guess with what joy the message of mercy would be received by those who had never yet heard it. Go, and see what it will do. How I should like a congregation of people who have never heard of Jesus Christ before! I should expect to have a blazing time of it, like the man who set light to a straw-stack, and found that he had a world of fire before him in no time. To hear of salvation by the blood of Jesus for the first time must be a sensation indeed! As for many of my hearers, they have heard of Jesus so long that the topic is stale. I feel you will never accept the Saviour, but will die in your sins. Those who have never heard of Jesus at all, often hear the gospel with great interest, and believe unto eternal life.

The Gentiles accepted the word. They did not sit down and cavil and raise questions, and so forth; but it is written, "they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord." This is more than many ministers do. Look at our divines now! What are they doing? They are not glorifying the Word of God, but taking the glory from it. According to some of them the Word of God in his Book is full of blunders: how much less trustworthy must it be as it is preached! The shepherds are now destroying the pastures. Holy Scripture, according to them, is not infallible. The sure word of testimony is no longer sure, according to modern ideas. With these I have no fellowship. O my soul, come not thou into their secret! Let us loathe such dishonouring of the Word of God. Let us get far away from all pretence of communion with these enemies of our faith.

Get among the poor, the lowly, the sinful. Tell them the glad news of pardon bought with blood. I warrant you, they will not turn critics, and cavil and find fault; but they will, many of them, believe unto eternal life. The man who has grown accustomed to luxuries is the man who turns his meat over, and picks off a bit here, and a bit there; for this is too fat, and that is too gristly. Bring in the poor wretches who are half-starved. Fetch in a company of labourers who have been waiting all day at the docks, and have found no work, and in consequence have received no wage. Set them down to a joint of meat. It vanishes before them. See what masters they are of the art of knife and fork! They find no fault: they never dream of such a thing. If the meat had been a little coarse, it would not have mattered to them; their need is too great for them to be dainty. Oh, for a host of hungry souls! How pleasant to feed them! How different from the task of persuading the satiated Pharisees to partake of the gospel! Go for them, beloved! Lay yourselves out to reach poor, needy souls. They will come to Jesus, though the self-righteous will not. A great

success awaits those who will again "turn to the Gentiles." Oh, for such a turning on the part of all who love the gospel of free grace!

V. I finish with the fifth point. THIS ENLARGEMENT, AND ALL ITS BLESSED RESULTS, WERE ORDAINED IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD. The record runs thus—"They were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Attempts have been made to prove that these words do not preach predestination; but these attempts so clearly do violence to language that I will not waste time in answering them. A great discussion has been carried on between those who believe in the free-will of man, and others who believe in the free grace of God. There is no real reason for this dispute, except when the man who believes in free-will denies God's freedom in grace, or when the man who magnifies free grace denies that man has any will. It is possible for both parties to be wrong; and, in a measure, for both to be right. Beloved, I used the first part of my text fairly, and I was not afraid to acknowledge the existence of free-will, and to deplore its doings. Now I read, "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," and I shall not twist the text; but I shall glorify the grace of God by ascribing to it every man's faith. Those who believed in Jesus believed in him because they were ordained unto eternal life. I will not bate a jot of what I believe to be the truth on either side of a debate. From the word of God I gather that damnation is all of man, from top to bottom, and salvation is all of grace, from first to last. He that perishes chooses to perish; but he that is saved is saved because God has chosen to save him. Though some cannot make these statements agree, they are nevertheless equally true—"Thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help found."

We believe that *the Lord knows them that are his, and knows them before they are openly manifested*, so that he says of a certain place, "I have much people in this city." Do you think that the Lord does not foreknow? How, then, can he prophesy? If God foresees a certain thing is to be, why, then, it must be; and has not this all the fixity of predestination? Moreover, "whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate." Is it not God that gives the disposition to believe? If men are disposed to have eternal life, does not he in every case dispose them? Is it wrong for God to give grace? If it be right for him to give it, is it wrong for him to purpose to give it? Would you have him give it by accident? If it is right for him to purpose to give grace to-day, it was right for him to have purposed it before that date. He is a God that changes not, and what he performeth to-day is not the purpose of to-day, but the purpose of all eternity: "For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." God knows and God appoints those who shall believe and be saved.

But please note this fact: *God can effect his purpose with man without violating his will.* He can leave man a man, with full use of his faculties, and yet turn his mind as he pleases. The will is never more free than in conversion, and yet it is never more under subjection to divine power. I do not know how the Lord governs the will: if I did know, I should be God. God does not new-create men as a baker makes loaves of bread, or a potter makes vessels, by manual skill and

force. No, he treats men as men: he deals with free agents as free agents; and yet he has as much power over them as the baker over the dough, or the potter over the clay. His supreme will acts omnipotently, and yet works with a holy delicacy which never violates the attributes of the mind. He makes men as much free agents in repentance, faith, and holiness, as they were when they ran greedily into sin. He makes his people willing in the day of his power, and thus glorifies his wisdom, his power, and his love. God has a purpose to save those whom he gave to his Son Jesus, and all these must come to Jesus for that salvation. I want you to believe this when you are at work for your Lord. When I have come into this pulpit on a Thursday night, I have thought, "It is very wet, and I shall not have many people"; but I have said to my friends in the vestry, "We shall have a picked congregation; God will send those whom he means to bless." I do not come here and preach at peradventure. What is to be done by preaching the gospel is determined from before all time, and it will be accomplished. If I were dependent upon the will of my hearers, and there were no supreme power over their wills, I should preach with a faint heart; but he that preaches the gospel with omnipotence at the back of him has a blessed and fruitful service.

Is not this cheering for the preacher? We shall not labour in vain, nor spend our strength for nought. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the gospel shall not fail. Men may rage against the gospel, and think to defeat its purpose; but the counsel of the Lord shall stand. All that the Lord intended in creation, and in providence, and in grace, will be assuredly accomplished to the last jot and tittle. In the kingdom of grace there shall be nothing to mar the glory of the Lord's triumph when the record has been fully written.

This is a great comfort to the worker. Let him be always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as his labour is not in vain in the Lord. Bowed to the earth with horror at the guilt involved in the wilful rejection of the Lord Jesus by our hearers, we nevertheless triumph in the firm conviction that God, who sends us, will go with us, and that his purpose shall stand. We believe in the sovereignty of God, not only in his right to do as he wills with his own grace, but also in his power to do so.

Our text is equally full of *comfort to the obedient hearer;* for if you believe, it follows that you are ordained unto eternal life. If you believe the gospel of truth; if you believe in the divine sense of trusting the Lord Jesus Christ; if you cast your guilty souls on Jesus, and look to him as lifted up, even as the brazen serpent was lifted in the wilderness, you are ordained unto eternal life. Trouble not yourself about election, but rather encourage yourself with it. This is sure evidence of your election, that you believe in Jesus; for "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." If thou believest, thou art ordained to possess on earth the holy life which temptation cannot destroy, and to enjoy for ever that heavenly life which eternity will not exhaust. Faith gives thee a life in Christ, which can no more die than the eternal Lord on whom it rests. Oh, that the sweet constraint of almighty love may lead trembling souls to trust Jesus at once, and live for ever!

I wish specially to speak to any here present who are not familiar with the gospel. I speak to rank outsiders, to people who know nothing of these things. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"—saved at once. "But I never go to a place of worship." I mean exactly you, my friend. "But I have been a swearer." I am thinking of the blasphemer. "But I have been an awful drunkard." To you I speak this gospel. "Alas!" cries one, "I shrink from your eye. I crept in here this morning, but I am a daughter of shame." I say to you, even to you—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." You are aimed at in the mission of Jesus. Trust him, and you are saved. "But I have been violent against the gospel." You are the very man that I am specially looking for. I prayed for you before I came to this place; for I prayed that Saul of Tarsus might this day become Paul the apostle. I long to win, by this sermon, some outrageous enemy of God, that he may become a fervent friend of Jesus. You are as black as a crow, and almost as bad as the devil, and therefore I long to see you converted at once, to become henceforth a leader in the church of God. Oh, for a batch of great saints made out of great sinners! Oh, that your energy, now used to fight against God, may be subdued by sovereign grace, and employed in defending and spreading the gospel of Jesus! Shall it be so, my friend? Oh, that some woman that is a sinner would come and wash our Lord's feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head! Come, you with long hair, unbind your tresses, and honour them by this service. If they have been a net in which to entangle precious lives, make them a towel for your Saviour's feet. Come, sinners, come to him who loves you! Bring them, O Lord! Hear us, O Jehovah, as we entreat thee to save them by the blood of thy well-beloved Son! Hear us now, we beseech thee, and save myriads! Amen, and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts xiii. 14—52.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—910, 956, 486.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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CONSOLATION FROM RESURRECTION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."—Hosea xiii. 14.

THIS verse stands in the midst of a long line of threatenings. Like a rock of mercy, it rises in the midst of a sea of wrath. Hence many critics have felt bound to see in it a continuation of threatening. I am quite content to accept the united authority of the Authorized and the Revised Versions, and to believe that the mind of the Holy Spirit is fairly expressed in the grand old Bible of our fathers. I regard our text as a promise overflowing with delight.

While it does stand as a rock apart, this gracious word is far from being the only one in the book of the prophet Hosea. In the torrent bed of this prophet's denunciations we find dust of the gold of promise. Hosea, in his style, is jerky and abrupt: he says exactly what you do not think he is going to say. The Holy Spirit, speaking through him, interjects promises in the midst of threatenings, in wrath remembering mercy. If any should think that this passage is exceptional, let them read the rest of Hosea's prophecy. Let them pause for a minute over the eleventh chapter, resting at the eighth verse: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not man." Where was ever greater tenderness than this? When you get to the twelfth chapter, at the ninth verse, a still small voice is heard in the midst of the thunder: "I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast." The fourteenth chapter is all of love and mercy: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips." Hear the gracious word, verse four—"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from

him." So that our text, in its Christian interpretation, is not contrary to the general method of this prophecy. To find it here is very surprising; but it is after the manner of the Holy Ghost, when speaking by the prophet Hosea.

Israel was coming to its very worst. The people were to be carried to Babylon, and thence to be scattered to the ends of the earth. Yet the Lord, in his great love, lets them know that this was not to be a final and entire destruction. He would not utterly cast away the people whom he did foreknow, nor allow death to hold them in bondage for ever. He would open their graves, and bring them out, and make them to know Jehovah. Therefore, he drops in this word of promise when it was least expected.

I. I shall ask you this morning, first, to CONSIDER THE FACT WHICH IS HERE USED AS A FIGURE. The resurrection of the dead is here employed as a figure of that which the Lord was about to do for his people. At one time salvation from sin is called a creation, and creation is a fact; here it is a resurrection from the dead, and that also is sure to be accomplished in due time: we have the first-fruits of it already.

Brethren, *there will be a special resurrection for those who are in Christ Jesus.* "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." But for the members of the body of Christ there is a resurrection from among the dead. These are the many that sleep in the dust of the earth who shall awake to everlasting life (Dan. xii. 2). They rise because they are one with Christ in his resurrection. His resurrection is the proof and the guarantee that they also shall rise in the day of his appearing. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. viii. 10). Their bodies, which were redeemed as truly as their souls, though left during this life under mortgage to nature, so that they suffer pain, and weakness, and ultimate death and decay—their bodies, I say, being a part of the purchase of the precious blood, shall be raised again from the dead. That which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power; that which is covered with dishonour by the very fact of death and decay shall be raised in splendour, made like unto the glorious body of Christ. This is no poetic fiction, but a literal matter of fact, even as was the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We hear our Redeemer say, "Thy brother shall rise again," and we accept it literally. Our dear ones whom we have laid in the grave shall come again from the land of the enemy. Concerning ourselves, also, we believe, as we just sang—

> "Sweet truth to me,
> I shall arise,
> And with these eyes
> My Saviour see."

We accept the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead as the revelation of Christianity. The immortality of the soul was seen before the appearing of our Lord in a dim and cloudy manner; but the resurrection of the dead was not discoverable by the light of nature, and when it was at first preached, men called the preacher a "babbler"; they

could not understand that such a thing could be. The philosophy of human nature rejected the resurrection, and rejects it still. Only by the revelation of Christ do we know that the dead shall rise again.

This resurrection is connected with redemption: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave." A ransom is the paying of a price for something. There was a price paid for us, to deliver us from the death which is the desert of sin. You know who paid it, and how he paid it. Remember how he opened wide his hands, and poured forth more than gold; remember how his side was digged by the spear, that the deep mines of his life-wealth might be emptied out for us. Jesus our Lord has paid the ransom price. Now are we "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23). Another word is used in the parallel sentence of our text—"I will redeem them from death." It refers to the redemption of an inheritance by the next-of-kin. "I know that my Redeemer liveth" is the ground of Job's confidence as to his resurrection and justification. My *goel*, my next-of-kin, to whom the right of redemption belonged in equity, has stepped in, and has fully redeemed both my soul and my body. What a blessed truth is this, that the ransom of the body is paid, so that this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality! Though the body remains for a while subject to vanity, yet the term of this subjection will soon run out, the ransom being already paid. Regeneration has liberated the soul, and resurrection will do the like for the body before long. The margin hath it, "I will ransom them from the hand of the grave: I will redeem them from death." O beloved, we come into the grave's hand, as it were, and firm is the grip of the sepulchre; but our God saith, "I will redeem them from the hand of the grave." The grave holds the bones of the saints as with the grasp of an iron hand; but the redemption of our Lord Jesus will open the giant fist, and set the prisoners free. Glory be to God for the sure hope of resurrection! No mass of stone, nor superincumbent clay, shall keep down these bodies of ours when our Saviour's angels shall "their golden trumpets sound." Beloved, there remains nothing due upon the estate of our bodies for which they can be detained in the dust when the Lord Jesus comes to awaken them from their long sleep. They shall freely rise to be reunited with the disembodied but happy spirits to which they belong. We look for a resurrection from among the dead. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power" (Rev. xx. 5, 6).

This, according to our text, is *wrought entirely by divine power*. It must be so; for how could the dead contribute to their own lives? How can bodies which have been dissolved in the sepulchre reconstruct themselves? Here you have in the text the divine personality asserting itself four times—"I will ransom them," "I will redeem them"; "O death, I will be thy plagues"; "O grave, I will be thy destruction." Here we have "I will" four times. Who but he that made can re-make? But all things are possible to the Creator. We have heard many objections raised to the doctrine of the

resurrection. Let them object as long as they please. Grant us a God, and nothing is impossible or even difficult. With a God who can work miracles nothing becomes incredible. Whatsoever the eternal God decreeth concerning the resurrection of his elect he will readily accomplish; for he is abundantly sufficient for it. What a triumph will the resurrection be for the Lord God! He hath been pleased to give the special honour of it to his own dear Son. By the risen Christ we shall be raised again from the dead. We shall sing hallelujahs to him that was slain. He by death has destroyed death, and by his resurrection has torn away the gates of the grave. This is our Lord's doings, and we adore him because of it.

Observe, next, that *by the resurrection death itself is transformed, and totally overcome.* He saith, "O death, I will be thy plagues," as if death were personified, and then itself plagued—its own arrows of pestilence being shot into itself. Beloved, death no longer kills, but rather admits to a larger life; it no more destroys, but the rather it perfects—I mean not of itself, but through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is no longer death to die; it is no longer punishment to the believer, but a dismissal from banishment. Ye that are in your sins will die in your sins, and to you death is death indeed; but to the child of God, death is so altered that he who hath the power of death, that is, the devil, is sore vexed. He is plagued by seeing the joy with which the believer dies. It is a grand thing to see a man dying full of life: the river of his mortal life comes to an end, but only by widening into the ocean of the glory-life above. Satan gloated over the mischief which he had wrought by death; but lo, it is through death that Jesus has destroyed him, and delivered his people. God makes his dying people to be like the sun, which never seems so large as when it sets. All the glories of mid-day are eclipsed by the marvels of sunset. Watch the west! See how the clouds are mountains of gold, and anon the skies are seas of fire. All the tapestries of heaven are hung out to welcome the returning hero of the day to his rest beyond the western sea. So does the dying saint light up his dying chamber with heavenly splendour as he sets upon this world to shine in another. Thus the Lord plagues death, leaving the monster powerless to harm or even terrify the believer.

As for the sepulchre, it is destroyed. "O grave, I will be thy destruction." No grave shall detain one of the redeemed. The tomb is

> "No more a charnel-house, to fence
> The relics of lost innocence;
> A place of ruin and decay
> The imprisoning stone is rolled away."

The grave is our bed-chamber, which our Lord himself hath furnished for us by leaving in it his own grave-clothes. It is a retiring-room whose odour is most sweet to love; for

> "There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
> And left a blest perfume."

Death, thou art not death! Grave, thou art no grave! The names remain, but the nature of the things has altered altogether.

To close this first subject—*this resurrection will abolish death and*

every possibility of it in the future. I notice that certain persons, in their anxiety to suck the meaning out of the word "everlasting," so as to avoid everlasting punishment, have questioned the everlasting nature of heaven. They have even gone the length of hinting that they are not quite clear that if believers get to heaven they will always remain there. Yes, and this is what it comes to. Nothing is safe from these revolutionists. They would tear away every covenant blessing from the children of God in their zeal to make the punishment of sin a trifle. To do honour to their own intellect, they would sacrifice the eternal blessedness of the blood-washed! But it is not so. Jesus has said—"Because I live ye shall live also." As long as Christ lives we must live: as long as Christ is in heaven we must be with him where he is, to behold his glory. So long as God is God his children, partakers of the divine nature, must live for ever, and be for ever blessed. Raised from the dead, and taken up to Christ's right hand, we shall henceforth fear no second death. When sun and moon grow dim with age, and earth's blue skies are rolled up like a worn-out vesture, we shall enjoy an age like the years of God's right hand, like his own eternity. The great I AM shall be the bliss of every soul whom Christ hath redeemed from the grave, and this shall know no end.

To this the Lord sets his seal. Do you want to see the red wax and the divine impression thereon? Look at the close of the text, "Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." There doth Jehovah declare his unalterable will; it must and shall be even so. That his saints shall rise from the dead is the immutable decree of God. In all this let us rejoice. Our future is bright with glory. These things are revealed to faith, but they are not to be seen of the eye, nor even conceived in the heart, nor pictured by the imagination.

> "I know not, oh, I know not, what joys await us there!
> What radiancy of glory! What bliss beyond compare!"

This much, however, we do know, that there is to be a rising for us, even as our Lord has risen, and we shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness. Constantly in Scripture is this resurrection used as the figure of God's delivering and blessing his people; and especially as the figure of regeneration or the giving of a new and spiritual life to those who were by nature dead in trespasses and sins. I intend to use it so in our next line of thought.

II. In the second place, IN THESE WORDS LIE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO LOOK FOR DELIVERANCE OUT OF GREAT TROUBLES. The encouragement comes in this way: God, that will surely raise his people from the dead by his own power, can and will as surely raise them from every kind of trouble and apparent destruction. If there can be any comparison of ease with omnipotence, it must be easier to raise Job from his dunghill, than to raise Job from his grave. If God, therefore, shall restore us from the sepulchre, he can certainly restore us from sickness, from poverty, from slander, from depression of spirit, from despair. That is clear; who shall doubt it?

God will delight to work the work of our deliverance. If he takes pleasure in raising a dead body, he will assuredly take pleasure in raising from their distresses those in whom he delights. The Lord

rejoices in our joy. He doth not afflict willingly, but he blesses us joyfully. Therefore, we may rest assured that he will turn again and have compassion, and raise us up from our downcastings.

The ends and designs for which the Lord afflicts them are very gracious, and we may expect that he will end the affliction when those designs are accomplished. When the Lord puts us into the furnace it is to refine us; and as soon as the dross is consumed he will bring forth the pure gold. He puts us under chastisement for our profit; and when that profit is seen, he will break the rod. We may assuredly expect that he who bringeth up dead bodies from the grave will bring his distressed people up from their troubles, when those troubles have wrought their lasting good.

And now, to come to the text, we must traverse the same ground again: *this deliverance comes through redemption.* Beloved, he that redeemed Israel from all iniquity will also redeem Israel from all his troubles. That redemption price of the Lord covers every necessity of his people, and supplies every mercy that they will need between here and heaven. Do not, therefore, doubt or despair, because your troubles seem as if they would slay you, for the Angel who has redeemed your body from death will redeem you from all evil. He that will bring your body from the grave, will love you up from the pit of trouble, even when you are ready to perish. Redemption covers all, and secures from every danger. He that died for you, lives for you, and cares for you. You shall be supplied, not only with grace and glory, but with food and raiment. "Thy bread shall be given thee; thy waters shall be sure." Oh, rest in the Lord; especially confide in the redemption of Jesus. Let the precious blood speak peace to you; for if he has bought your soul, he has bought all that goes with it, and all that is needed for this life as well as the next. As well our temporal as our eternal concerns come under the protection of the blood. The Paschal lamb, whose sprinkled blood shielded the house wherein the Israelite was sheltered, also became to him food for his journey. He who provides heaven will provide all necessaries on the road thither.

This deliverance will also be God's work. I have shown you that it was so in resurrection, concerning which the great "I will" is so prominent in the text. Now, if you are in great trouble, do not run to friends and acquaintances, nor reckon up your own strength, but make direct resort to God, who quickeneth the dead. He that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus is he that can and will deliver you. He will raise up your mortal body without the help of man or of angel; and he can, apart from created strength, upraise you from your present woe. He is the God of salvation, and unto him belong the issues from death. His name is Shaddai—God all-sufficient; trust him fully. When he made the heavens, who was there to help him? What aid does he need in rescuing his servants? Oh, learn to wait only upon the Lord! Do not think that I am talking mere words. No; trust in God must be real and practical, and it must be simple and unmixed. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." Oh, how sweet it is to rest on God's bare arm! Long have I known what it is to trust in God, and at the

same time to repose on the help of many friends; but now I know what it is to rest in him unmoved when forsaken of many. I cling to that dear arm, and find it all the help I need. And now I will henceforth abide in my confidence in that lone arm; and should deserters all return, and ten thousand friends rally to my side, I will not spare them a particle of my reliance, but still cry, "My soul, wait thou only upon God." Behold the great hero of the conflict with the powers of darkness treads the wine-press alone, and of the people there is none with him: let us associate none with him in our faith. If you rest on God alone, as the rock of your salvation, you need never fear. Often does the Lord afflict us to this end, even as Paul saith, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."

When the Lord delivers his people, *his work is singularly complete, for he triumphantly turns evil into good.* We shall yet exult over that which now casts us down. That which threatened to kill us shall increase our life, and we shall hear our Lord say to it, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." He will turn mourning into dancing, loss into gain, sorrows into joys. He will enrich you by your impoverishment; he will make you strong out of weakness; he will give you health by means of sickness; and fulness by emptying you. Does the adversary threaten to destroy you? You shall be more than a conqueror. Are you led away in bonds? You shall lead your captivity captive. Those who seek your ruin will unconsciously be doing the best thing that could be done for you. Their malice shall bruise your spices, and cause their aroma to flow out. He that by shameful death winneth greater glory shall by your afflictions increase your greatness, and comfort you on every side. The Lord will not only prevent the powers of evil from doing you harm, but he will cause you to damage their empire by your patience. You shall be the plague of Satan and the destroyer of his strongholds. That which seemed to be the death and burial of your hope shall be the overthrow of your fears.

The Lord will do this so completely that *he will make you sing concerning it.* In the book of Hosea the Lord declared a fact in plain language; but when the work was done the Lord by his servant Paul made it into a song for his chosen in that famous chapter of the Corinthians—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Let us catch the spirit of this lyric, and translate it thus! "O poverty, where is thy penury? O sickness, where is thy misery? O weakness, where is thy loss? O slander, where is thy sting?" We shall before long look back upon all our afflictions with gladness, and bless the Lord for them as for our chiefest blessings. We may yet feel like that great saint who, when he recovered from sickness, cried, "Take me back to my sick bed again, for there have I enjoyed such fellowship with Christ as I never knew before." We may yet have to say, as certain saints of the Church of Scotland said, "Oh, that we were meeting among the moors and the hills once more; for never had the bride of Christ such followship with the Bridegroom as when she met him in secret places." The Lord knoweth how to lift us high by that which cast us low, and to make

psalms for our stringed instruments out of the dirges which drowned our music. The God of the resurrection has delivered, doth deliver, and will deliver his people.

III. Time fails me, and therefore I must hurry on, else I had loved to linger and expand. SEE HERE A DECLARATION THAT GOD WILL SAVE HIS CHOSEN FROM THEIR DEATH IN SIN. He that will raise our bodies from the grave will, according to his everlasting covenant, raise his chosen from their death in sin.

This must be so. If the Lord did not raise his people's souls from their death in sin, a resurrection of their bodies would be a curse rather than a blessing. Resurrection will be no boon to those who die unregenerate. My hearers, you will all rise from the grave; but I fear that some of you will rise to shame and everlasting contempt. That is an awful passage which I quoted just now from the Book of Daniel: think much of it. Therefore since God will not have his people rise to shame and everlasting contempt he will make their souls to rise first into newness of holy life. This regeneration must come to all of you, if you are to be partakers of the glory of Christ hereafter. Ye must be quickened, though ye were dead in trespasses and sins. That fact suggests a question to each heart—Have you received the divine life?

If you are indeed made alive unto God, you will agree with me that *this resurrection comes to us entirely through redemption.* There is no quickening a dead soul, except by the process here described: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death." Did the law of God, when you heard it, ever quicken you? Nay, it slew you. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." It made your death more apparent to you, but it brought you no life. Did the eloquence of men, or human persuasion, ever raise you from spiritual death? You listened to it, and you listened, but you listened in vain. You were moved with human affections, but these human affections passed away, like the morning dew. Beloved, life only came to you when you received Christ Jesus, your Redeemer. Well do I remember when I first looked unto him, and lived! The life and the look came together. There is no receiving eternal life apart from believing in him who is the life. There is no life except by looking unto Jesus. Your uplifted eye must be fixed on the uplifted Saviour, crucified as the redemption of his people: life only comes to us through his redeeming death. God himself only maketh us live by Christ Jesus. He is the life. You cannot yourself create life; nor can you renew it, except by coming to your Lord's dear wounds again. Oh, that we could dwell on Calvary! Oh, that we never turned our eyes away from the cross! Let me be crucified with Christ, so as never to part from perpetual, conscious union with him. In him we died unto sin, in him we were redeemed from death and the curse, and in him we live for ever. Our resurrection from spiritual death is always connected with the precious blood once shed for many, for the remission of sins.

You will follow me in this also: *quickening is always the Lord's work.* Here he may repeat the "I will" of the text all the four times. We spoke of resurrection as solely the work of God, so must the

implantation of spiritual life be the work of the Spirit of God, and of him alone. Never let us dream that we can make ourselves alive unto God, or that we can quicken our unconverted friends. You could not make the simplest insect, how could you make a new heart and a right spirit? This is the finger of God, nay, this needs the arm of God, as it is written, "to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed"? The full power of God is needed to beget faith's life within the soul of man.

Further, keep up the parallel between regeneration and resurrection as seen in the text, and notice that *whenever the Lord raises his dear ones from the dead, and makes them live, it is a great plague to death.* He that hath the power of death must often be grievously annoyed when he sees a dead sinner begin to live unto God. "I did reckon on him," saith he. "I wrapped him up in the cerements of drunkenness, I shut him up in the dark sepulchre of ignorance; and yet he is alive!" "I did reckon on the debauched man," saith he, "I saw him rotting in lasciviousness; he was so far gone in lust that he was given over by his friends; but my great enemy Jesus Christ has come here, and made even the corrupt to live!" Again and again the adversary has to feel that Christ is his plague, and that he will be his destruction. When Jesus raises men from the dead, he shows who is Master, and makes the adversary know that his dominion is soon to fall. As in his lifetime on earth the Lord overcame both the devil and death by a word, even so it is now, and his name is thereby greatly glorified.

Those who are made alive, how greatly do they plague the enemy of souls when they begin to talk aloud of free grace and dying love? When black sinners show themselves washed in the blood of the lamb, when lips that used to curse begin to sing hallelujahs, and tongues that talked infidelity begin to proclaim the testimony of the true faith, how the prince of darkness is afflicted! How the sepulchres of sin are destroyed! Right well does the poet say:—

> "Satan rages at his loss,
> And hates the doctrine of the cross."

This work once done is an abiding work. I point again to the seal at the bottom of the text. "Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." God resolves that they shall live, for he has redeemed them, and his redemption price is too precious to be wasted. He has ransomed them from the grave, and they shall never return to their grim prison-house again, they shall live to plague Satan, but they shall not live to be overcome by him. What the Lord has done he will not suffer sin, death and hell to undo. Nothing shall lead him to repent of his design, or turn from the purpose of his heart. Jesus lifts his hand and says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Man's work is superficial, and therefore soon disappears. All that nature spins, nature unravels: all that is woven in the loom of human excitement will be rent to pieces by the hand of time and trial; but surely I know that what God doeth he doth for ever, and it standeth fast without a change. Oh, that he would this morning

come and quicken dead souls! Pray, dear people, that it may be so! The Lord will do as he wills. Doth he not say, "I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion"? Oh, that he would have compassion on this great congregation at this moment, and give them life! We heard the cry of human weakness just now when our sister was taken in a fit; I doubt not that our Lord heard it too, and pitied the bodily infirmity; how much more will he hear the voice of our spiritual need, and have pity upon our death in sin!

IV. What little time you can yet afford me, I will use in stating that HERE WE HAVE AN ASSURANCE THAT THE LORD CAN DELIVER FROM ANY OTHER FORM OF DEATH. I ask you now to think of a few matters very briefly.

The Jews: as an organized nationality they are dead. They are a people scattered and divided under the whole heaven. Truly might they say, as in the prophet Ezekiel, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts." We have no instance in history of a nation dying and coming to life again. Assyria, Babylon, these had their day, and they failed and passed away. Where are they now? Can these empires live again? Persia, Greece, Rome, these vast dominions died morally, and then they ceased to be a living power. Can they ever be restored? Impossible. But because her God liveth, Israel can never die. Israel will be a nation yet again, and a glorious one. Restored to her own land, and rejoicing in her own Messiah, who is "the glory of his people Israel," it shall be seen that the Lord hath not cast off his people. It seems impossible. Our missions are, to a large extent, a failure; they become the ridicule of the ungodly because so little success attends them. Yet shall all Israel be saved. Shall not their restoration be as life from the dead? It shall; and because it will be like life from the dead, he that will raise dead bodies will raise poor Israel yet. The seed of faithful Abraham, who believed God that he could raise up Isaac from the dead, shall be raised out of their low estate. A nation of priests shall they be unto him who of old made them the keepers of his oracles. O lovers of the seed of Abraham, be comforted concerning them.

In the next place, suppose the *church at large* should decline to a spiritual death—and I am sure it does so just now—what then? The faults which are now so apparent may only be the beginning of worse evils. Brethren are prophesying that the Jesuits will ruin us, and others that Rationalism will eat out the heart of the church. I think both these sets of prophets have a good deal to say for themselves; the signs of the times are much with them. But suppose error should become rampant in all our churches, as it may; suppose those who bear testimony should grow fewer, and their voices should be less and less regarded, as they may be; suppose at last the true church of Christ should scarcely be discoverable, and that men should bury it, and dance a saraband upon its grave, and say, "We have done with these believers in atonement. We have done with these troublesome evangelical doctrines." What then? The truth will rise again. The eternal gospel will burst her sepulchre. "Vain the watch, the stone, the seal." Let us take comfort in the fact that God, who will raise the dead, will also raise up buried truth, and incarnate it again

in a living church, even though the world should exult that both doctrine and church are down among the dead.

Some of you perhaps from the country may happen to belong to *churches* which have come near to death's door. That which is true of the church at large is true of any individual church. Have faith in God. He can trim the expiring lamp. Even to Laodicea, which he spewed out of his mouth, the Lord came, knocking at the door. They talk about shutting the doors of the chapel. Has it come to that? Prayer-meetings, are they given up? Gospel preaching, have you almost forgotten the joyful sound? The Sunday-school, has that become a farce. Does everything seem dead? Cry to the living God. Do not say to yourself, "Can these dry bones live?" They can, if the living God intervenes. God, who made Ezekiel see the dry bones stand up as a great army, can make you see it yet. Be of good confidence. Have hope for Zion, for the Lord will restore her in answer to your cries. Take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof, for the time to favour her, yea, the set time has come. "When the Lord shall build up Zion he will appear in his glory."

Suppose I am now speaking to *some child of God*, who says, "I can believe all this; but, alas! I feel dead myself." We do sometimes faint, and are full of fears, and cry, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?" We trust we do really love the Lord; but we get very dull at times, and cry out—

> "Dear Lord, and shall we always live
> At this poor, dying rate:
> Our love so faint, so cold to thee,
> And thine to us so great?"

We feel as if we could not pray; there is no singing in us; and we feel as if we could not feel. At times we are so dull and stupid that we cannot think ourselves to be enlightened of the Lord at all. For my own part, "I am more brutish than any man" at times, in my own esteem. Be our case as it may, let not faith waver because feeling changes. When you are down in the dumps, remember that as the Lord will raise your dead body, he can certainly revive your fainting heart. Trust in him to restore your soul. This very morning, I hope, is ordained to be a resurrection morning to you. Before you quit this house of prayer I hope the silver trumpet of the gospel will be heard like the trumpet of the resurrection, and you will say to yourself, "I will quit my grave, for I live unto God." By God's grace, leave the vaults and come into the upper air of trust and thanksgiving. A man, finding himself imbedded in the snow, discovered, to his horror, that he could not move his feet, for they were frozen; nor his hands, for they were stiff with cold. He would have given himself up, therefore, as certainly doomed to die, but he found that he could speak, and here was hope. His tongue was not frozen, so he began to call aloud; and he did not call long before helpers came and dug him out, and thawed him back to life. If you cannot do anything else, my dear friend, do cry aloud. Cry, "O God, help me! Quicken thou me, O Lord."

Do any of you say, "Well, I never get into so sad a state. I am always lively"? I am very glad to hear it, if it be true. But I have

heard that the statues in St. Paul's Cathedral are never afflicted with rheumatism; and the reason is, because they have no life. I am just a little afraid that you also may have no changes and no fears, because you have no spiritual life. God knows whether it is so or not. Look to it. I would sooner have the rheumatism, and be alive, than be without pain, and be a statue. The most painful life is preferable to the stillest death. But O ye dying saints of God; ye poor, fainting, perishing believers, take hope this morning, for the Holy Spirit will revive you, even as Jesus saith, "He that liveth and believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Lastly, let us have that same hope about *our unconverted friends.* We want to see them born again during this week of special services. Let us begin by knowing what they are, and what is their condition. Do not say, "I hope my boy will be saved, because I do not see much evil in him." Your boy is as spiritually dead by nature as anybody else's boy. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"; and however good your flesh may be, it is only flesh, and only flesh has come of it. I beg you to regard every soul that is not begotten unto God as being dead in sin, else you will not go to the bottom of things, and you will not go the right way to work. Next, go to the Lord and Giver of life, and say, "Lord, I cannot make this dear child live; I cannot bring my unconverted husband to thee. I will do all I can by teaching, persuasion and example; but O my Lord, I look to thee to give the spark of divine life." Go to God with your anxiety for dead souls, and cry, "Lord, quicken them!" In dependence upon the Spirit of God, preach the gospel, which is the vehicle of divine life, and you shall see them live. Have faith about those who are laid on your heart. God grant your faith a full and speedy reward, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxxviii.; Ezekiel xxxvii. 1—14.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—911, 843, 841.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NO COMPROMISE.

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, October 7th, 1888, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again."—Genesis xxiv. 5—8.

Genesis is both the book of beginnings and the book of dispensations. You know what use Paul makes of Sarah and Hagar, of Esau and Jacob, and the like. Genesis is, all through, a book instructing the reader in the dispensations of God towards man. Paul saith, in a certain place, "which things are an allegory," by which he did not mean that they were not literal facts, but that, being literal facts, they might also be used instructively as an allegory. So may I say of this chapter. It records what actually was said and done; but at the same time, it bears within it allegorical instruction with regard to heavenly things. The true minister of Christ is like this Eleazar of Damascus; he is sent to find a wife for his Master's Son. His great desire is, that many shall be presented unto Christ in the day of his appearing, as the bride, the Lamb's wife.

The faithful servant of Abraham, before he started, communed with his master; and this is a lesson to us, who go on our Lord's errands. Let us, before we engage in actual service, see the Master's face, talk with him, and tell to him any difficulties which occur to our minds. Before we get to work, let us know what we are at, and on what footing we stand. Let us hear from our Lord's own mouth what he expects us to do, and how far he will help us in the doing of it. I charge you, my fellow-servants, never to go forth to plead with men for God until you have first pleaded with God for men. Do not attempt to deliver a message which you have not first of all yourself received by his Holy Spirit. Come out of the chamber of fellowship with God into the pulpit of ministry among men, and there will be a freshness and a power about you which none shall be able to resist.

Abraham's servant spoke and acted as one who felt bound to do exactly what his master bade him, and to say what his master told him; hence his one anxiety was to know the essence and measure of his commission. During his converse with his master he mentioned one little point about which there might be a hitch; and his master soon removed the difficulty from his mind. It is about that hitch, which has occurred lately on a very large scale, and has upset a good many of my Master's servants, that I am going to speak this morning: may God grant that it may be to the benefit of his church at large!

I. Beginning our sermon, we will ask you, first, to THINK OF THE SERVANT'S JOYFUL BUT WEIGHTY ERRAND. It was a joyful errand: the bells of marriage were ringing around him. The marriage of the heir should be a joyful event. It was an honourable thing for the servant to be entrusted with the finding of a wife for his master's son. Yet it was every way a most responsible business, by no means easy of accomplishment. Blunders might very readily occur before he was aware of it; and he needed to have all his wits about him, and something more than his wits, too, for so delicate a matter. He had to journey far, over lands without track or road; he had to seek out a family which he did not know, and to find out of that family a woman whom he did not know, who nevertheless should be the right person to be the wife of his master's son: all this was a great service.

The work this man undertook was *a business upon which his master's heart was set.* Isaac was now forty years old, and had shown no sign of marrying. He was of a quiet, gentle spirit, and needed a more active spirit to urge him on. The death of Sarah had deprived him of the solace of his life, which he had found in his mother, and had, no doubt, made him desire tender companionship. Abraham himself was old, and well stricken in years; and he very naturally wished to see the promise beginning to be fulfilled, that in Isaac should his seed be called. Therefore, with great anxiety, which is indicated by his making his servant swear an oath of a most solemn kind, he gave him the commission to go to the old family abode in Mesopotamia, and seek for Isaac a bride from thence. Although that family was not all that could be desired, yet it was the best he knew of; and as some heavenly light lingered there, he hoped to find in that place the best wife for his son. The business was, however, a serious one which he committed to his servant. My brethren, this is nothing compared with the weight which hangs on the true minister of Christ. All the Great Father's heart is set on giving to Christ a church which shall be his beloved for ever. Jesus must not be alone: his church must be his dear companion. The Father would find a bride for the great Bridegroom, a recompense for the Redeemer, a solace for the Saviour: therefore he lays it upon all whom he calls to tell out the gospel, that we should seek souls for Jesus, and never rest till hearts are wedded to the Son of God. Oh, for grace to carry out this commission!

This message was the more weighty because of the person for whom the spouse was sought. Isaac was an extraordinary personage; indeed, to the servant he was unique. He was a man born according to promise, not after the flesh, but by the power of God; and you know how in Christ, and in all that are one with Christ, the life comes by the promise

and the power of God, and springeth not of man. Isaac was himself the fulfilment of promise, and the heir of the promise. Infinitely glorious is our Lord Jesus as the Son of man! Who shall declare his generation? Where shall be found a helpmeet for him? a soul fit to be espoused unto him? Isaac had been sacrificed; he had been laid upon the altar, and although he did not actually die, his father's hand had unsheathed the knife wherewith to slay him. Abraham in spirit had offered up his son; and you know who he is of whom we preach, and for whom we preach, even Jesus, who has laid down his life a sacrifice for sinners. He has been presented as a whole burnt-offering unto God. Oh! by the wounds, and by the bloody sweat, I ask you where shall we find a heart fit to be wedded to him? How shall we find men and women who can worthily recompense love so amazing, so divine, as that of him who died the death of the cross? Isaac had also been, in a figure, raised from the dead. To his father he was "as good as dead," as said the apostle; and he was given back to him from the dead. But our blessed Lord has actually risen from an actual death, and stands before us this day as the Conqueror of death, and the Spoiler of the grave. Who shall be joined to this Conqueror? Who is fit to dwell in glory with this glorious One? One would have thought that every heart would aspire to such happiness, and leap in prospect of such peerless honour, and that none would shrink back except through a sense of great unworthiness. Alas! it is not so, though so it ought to be.

What a weighty errand have we to fulfil to find those who shall be linked for ever in holy union with the Heir of the promise, even the sacrificed and risen One! Isaac was everything to Abraham. Abraham would have said to Isaac, "All that I have is thine." So is it true of our blessed Lord, whom he hath made heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds, that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." What a dignity will be put upon any of you who are married to Christ! To what a height of eminence will you be uplifted by becoming one with Jesus! O preacher, what a work hast thou to do to-day, to find out those to whom thou shalt give the bracelet, and upon whose face thou shalt hang the jewel! To whom shall I say, "Wilt thou give thy heart to my Lord! Wilt thou have Jesus to be thy confidence, thy salvation, thine all in all? Art thou willing to become his that he may be thine?"

Said I not truly that it was a joyful, but a weighty errand, when you think *what she must be to whom his master's son should be espoused?* She must, at least, be willing and beautiful. In the day of God's power hearts are made willing. There can be no marriage to Jesus without a heart of love. Where shall we find this willing heart? Only where the grace of God has wrought it. Ah, then, I see how I may find beauty, too, among the sons of men! Marred as our nature is by sin, only the Holy Spirit can impart that beauty of holiness which will enable the Lord Jesus to see comeliness in his chosen. Alas! in our hearts there is an aversion to Christ, and an unwillingness to accept of him, and at the same time a terrible unfitness and unworthiness! The Spirit of God implants a love which is of heavenly origin, and renews the heart by a regeneration from above; and then

we seek to be one with Jesus, but not till then. See, then, how our errand calls for the help of God himself.

Think what she will become who is to be married to Isaac? She is to be his delight; his loving friend and companion. She is to be partner of all his wealth; and specially is she to be a partaker in the great covenant promise, which was peculiarly entailed upon Abraham and his family. When a sinner comes to Christ, what does Christ make of him? His delight is in him: he communes with him; he hears his prayer, he accepts his praise; he works in him and with him, and glorifies himself in him. He makes the believing man joint-heir with himself of all that he has, and introduces him into the covenant treasure-house, wherein the riches and glory of God are stored up for his chosen. Ah, dear friends! it is a very small business in the esteem of some to preach the gospel; and yet, if God is with us, ours is more than angels' service. In a humble way you are telling of Jesus to your boys and girls in your classes; and some will despise you as "only Sunday-school teachers"; but your work has a spiritual weight about it unknown to conclaves of senators, and absent from the counsels of emperors. Upon what you say, death, and hell, and worlds unknown are hanging. You are working out the destinies of immortal spirits, turning souls from ruin to glory, from sin to holiness.

"'Tis not a work of small import
Your loving care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And filled the Saviour's hands."

In carrying out his commission, *this servant must spare no exertion.* It would be required of him to journey to a great distance, having a general indication of direction, but not knowing the way. He must have divine guidance and protection. When he reached the place, he must exercise great common-sense, and at the same time a trustful dependence upon the goodness and wisdom of God. It would be a wonder of wonders if he ever met the chosen woman, and only the Lord could bring it to pass. He had all the care and the faith required. We have read the story of how he journeyed, and prayed, and pleaded. We should have cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?" but we see that the Lord Jehovah made him sufficient, and his mission was happily carried out. How can we put ourselves into the right position to get at sinners, and win them for Jesus? How can we learn to speak the right words? How shall we suit our teaching to the condition of their hearts? How shall we adapt ourselves to their feelings, their prejudices, their sorrows, and their temptations? Brethren, we who preach the gospel continually may well cry, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." To seek for pearls at the bottom of the sea is child's play compared with seeking for souls in this wicked London. If God be not with us, we may look our eyes out, and wear our tongues away in vain. Only as the Almighty God shall lead, and guide, and influence, and inspire, can we perform our solemn trust; only by divine help shall we joyfully come back, bringing with us the chosen of the Lord. We are the Bridegroom's friends, and we rejoice greatly in his joy, but we

sigh and cry till we have found the chosen hearts in whom he will delight, whom he shall raise to sit with him upon his throne.

II. Secondly, I would have you CONSIDER THE REASONABLE FEAR WHICH IS MENTIONED. Abraham's servant said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land." This is a very serious, grave, and common difficulty. If the woman be not willing, nothing can be done; force and fraud are out of the question; there must be a true will, or there can be no marriage in this instance. Here was the difficulty: here was a will to be dealt with. Ah, my brethren! this is our difficulty still. Let me describe this difficulty in detail as it appeared to the servant, and appears to us.

She may not believe my report, or be impressed by it. When I come to her, and tell her that I am sent by Abraham, she may look me in the face, and say, "There be many deceivers nowadays." If I tell her that my master's son is surpassingly beautiful and rich, and that he would fain take her to himself, she may answer, "Strange tales and romances are common in these days; but the prudent do not quit their homes." Brethren, in our case this is a sad fact. The great evangelical prophet cried of old, "Who hath believed our report?" We also cry in the same words. Men care not for the report of God's great love to the rebellious sons of men. They do not believe that the infinitely glorious Lord is seeking the love of poor, insignificant man, and to win it has laid down his life. Calvary, with its wealth of mercy, grief, love, and merit, is disregarded. Indeed, we tell a wonderful story, and it may well seem too good to be true; but it is sad indeed that the multitude of men go their ways after trifles, and count these grand realities to be but dreams. I am bowed down with dismay that my Lord's great love, which led him even to die for men, should hardly be thought worthy of your hearing, much less of your believing. Here is a heavenly marriage, and right royal nuptials placed within your reach; but with a sneer you turn aside, and prefer the witcheries of sin.

There was another difficulty: *she was expected to feel a love to one she had never seen.* She had only newly heard that there was such a person as Isaac, but yet she must love him enough to leave her kindred, and go to a distant land. This could only be because she recognized the will of Jehovah in the matter. Ah, my dear hearers! all that we tell you is concerning things not seen as yet; and here is our difficulty. You have eyes, and you want to see everything; you have hands, and you want to handle everything; but there is one whom you cannot see as yet, who has won our love because of what we believe concerning him. We can truly say of him, "Whom having not seen, we love: in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." I know that you answer our request thus: "You demand too much of us when you ask us to love a Christ we have never seen." I can only answer, "It is even so: we do ask more of you than we expect to receive." Unless God the Holy Ghost shall work a miracle of grace upon your hearts, you will not be persuaded by us to quit your old associations, and join yourselves to our beloved Lord. And yet, if you did come to him, and love him, he would more than content you; for you would

find in him rest unto your souls, and a peace which passeth all understanding.

Abraham's servant may have thought: *She may refuse to make so great a change* as to quit Mesopotamia for Canaan. She had been born and bred away there in a settled country, and all her associations were with her father's house; and to marry Isaac she must tear herself away. So, too, you cannot have Jesus, and have the world too: you must break with sin to be joined to Jesus. You must come away from the licentious world, the fashionable world, the scientific world, and from the (so-called) religious world. If you become a Christian, you must quit old habits, old motives, old ambitions, old pleasures, old boasts, old modes of thought. All things must become new. You must leave the things you have loved, and seek many of those things which you have hitherto despised. There must come to you as great a change as if you had died, and were made over again. You answer, "Must I endure all this for One whom I have never seen, and for an inheritance on which I have never set my foot?" It is even so. Although I am grieved that you turn away, I am not in the least surprised, for it is not given to many to see him who is invisible, or to choose the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life. The man or woman who will follow God's messenger to be married to so strange a Bridegroom is a rare bird.

Moreover, it might be a great difficulty to Rebekah, if she had had any difficulties at all, to think that *she must henceforth lead a pilgrim life.* She would quit house and farm for tent and gipsy life. Abraham and Isaac found no city to dwell in, but wandered from place to place, dwelling alone, sojourners with God. Their outward mode of life was typical of the way of faith, by which men live in the world, and are not of it. To all intents and purposes Abraham and Isaac were out of the world, and lived on its surface without lasting connection with it. They were the Lord's men, and the Lord was their possession. He set himself apart for them, and they were set apart for him. Rebekah might well have said, "That will never do for me. I cannot outlaw myself. I cannot quit the comforts of a settled abode to ramble over the fields wherever the flocks may require me to roam." It does not strike the most of mankind that it would be a good thing to be in the world, and yet not to be of it. They are no strangers in the world, they long to be admitted more fully into its "society." They are not aliens here with their treasures in heaven, they long to have a good round sum on earth, and find their heaven in enjoying it themselves, and enriching their families. Earthworms as they are, the earth contents them. If any man becomes unworldly, and makes spiritual things his one object, they despise him as a dreamy enthusiast. Many men think that the things of religion are merely meant to be read of, and to be preached about; but that to live for them would be to spend a dreamy, unpractical existence. Yet the spiritual is, after all, the only real: the material is in deepest truth the visionary and unsubstantial. Still, when people turn away because of the hardness of holy warfare, and the spirituality of the believing life, we are not astonished, for we hardly hoped it could be otherwise. Unless the Lord renews the heart, men will

always prefer the bird-in-the-hand of this life to the bird-in-the-bush of the life to come.

Moreover, it might be that the woman *might not care for the covenant of promise.* If she had no regard for Jehovah and his revealed will, she was not likely to go with the man, and enter upon marriage with Isaac. He was the heir of the promises, the inheritor of the covenant privileges which the Lord by oath had promised. His chosen would become the mother of that chosen seed in whom God had ordained to bless the world throughout all the ages, even the Messiah, the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head.

Peradventure the woman might not see the value of the covenant, nor appreciate the glory of the promise. The things we have to preach of, such as life everlasting, union with Christ, resurrection from the dead, reigning with him for ever and ever, seem to the dull hearts of men to be as idle tales. Tell them of a high interest for their money, of large estates to be had for a venture, or of honours to be readily gained, and inventions to be found out, they open all their eyes and their ears, for here is something worth knowing; but the things of God, eternal, immortal, boundless—these are of no importance to them. They could not be induced to go from Ur to Canaan for such trifles as eternal life, and heaven, and God.

So you see our difficulty. Many disbelieve altogether, and others cavil and object. A greater number will not even listen to our story; and of those who do listen, most are careless, and others dally with it, and postpone the serious consideration. Alas! we speak to unwilling ears.

III. In the third place, I would ENLARGE UPON HIS VERY NATURAL SUGGESTION. This prudent steward said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: *Must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?*" If she will not come to Isaac, shall Isaac go down to her? This is the suggestion of the present hour: if the world will not come to Jesus, shall Jesus tone down his teachings to the world? In other words, if the world will not rise to the church, shall not the church go down to the world? Instead of bidding men to be converted, and come out from among sinners, and be separate from them, let us join with the ungodly world, enter into union with it, and so pervade it with our influence by allowing it to influence us. Let us have a Christian world.

To this end let us revise our doctrines. Some are old-fashioned, grim, severe, unpopular; let us drop them out. Use the old phrases so as to please the obstinately orthodox, but give them new meanings so as to win philosophical infidels, who are prowling around. Pare off the edges of unpleasant truths, and moderate the dogmatic tone of infallible revelation: say that Abraham and Moses made mistakes, and that the books which have been so long had in reverence are full of errors. Undermine the old faith, and bring in the new doubt; for the times are altered, and the spirit of the age suggests the abandonment of everything that is too severely righteous, and too surely of God.

The deceitful adulteration of doctrine is attended by a falsification of experience. Men are now told that they were born good, or were made so by their infant baptism, and so that great sentence, "Ye must

be born again," is deprived of its force. Repentance is ignored, faith is a drug in the market as compared with "honest doubt," and mourning for sin and communion with God are dispensed with, to make way for entertainments, and Socialism, and politics of varying shades. A new creature in Christ Jesus is looked upon as a sour invention of bigoted Puritans. It is true, with the same breath they extol Oliver Cromwell; but then 1888 is not 1648. What was good and great three hundred years ago is mere cant to-day. That is what "modern thought" is telling us; and under its guidance all religion is being toned down. Spiritual religion is despised, and a fashionable morality is set up in its place. Do yourself up tidily on Sunday; behave yourself; and above all, believe everything except what you read in the Bible, and you will be all right. Be fashionable, and think with those who profess to be scientific—this is the first and great commandment of the modern school; and the second is like unto it—do not be singular, but be as worldly as your neighbours. Thus is Isaac going down into Padan-aram: thus is the church going down to the world.

Men seem to say—It is of no use going on in the old way, fetching out one here and another there from the great mass. We want a quicker way. To wait till people are born again, and become followers of Christ, is a long process: let us abolish the separation between the regenerate and unregenerate. Come into the church, all of you, converted or unconverted. You have good wishes and good resolutions; that will do: don't trouble about more. It is true you do not believe the gospel, but neither do we. You believe something or other. Come along; if you do not believe anything, no matter; your "honest doubt" is better by far than faith. "But," say you, "nobody talks so." Possibly they do not use the same words, but this is the real meaning of the present-day religion; this is the drift of the times. I can justify the broadest statement I have made by the action or by the speech of certain ministers, who are treacherously betraying our holy religion under pretence of adapting it to this progressive age. The new plan is to assimilate the church to the world, and so include a larger area within it bounds. By semi-dramatic performances they make houses of prayer to approximate to the theatre; they turn their services into musical displays, and their sermons into political harangues or philosophical essays—in fact, they exchange the temple for the theatre, and turn the ministers of God into actors, whose business it is to amuse men. Is it not so, that the Lord's-day is becoming more and more a day of recreation or of idleness, and the Lord's house either a joss-house full of idols, or a political club, where there is more enthusiasm for a party than zeal for God? Ah me! the hedges are broken down, the walls are levelled, and to many there is, henceforth, no church except as a portion of the world, no God except as an unknowable force by which the laws of nature work.

This, then, is the proposal. In order to win the world, the Lord Jesus must conform himself, his people, and his Word to the world. I will not dwell any longer on so loathsome a proposal.

IV. In the fourth place, NOTICE HIS MASTER'S OUTSPOKEN, BELIEVING REPUDIATION OF THE PROPOSAL. He says, shortly and sharply, "*Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.*" The Lord Jesus Christ heads

that grand emigration party which has come right out from the world. Addressing his disciples, he says, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We are not of the world by birth, not of the world in life, not of the world in object, not of the world in spirit, not of the world in any respect whatever. Jesus, and those who are in him, constitute a new race. The proposal to go back to the world is abhorrent to our best instincts; yea, deadly to our noblest life. A voice from heaven cries, "Bring not my son thither again." Let not the people whom the Lord brought up out of Egypt return to the house of bondage; but let their children come out, and be separate, and the Lord Jehovah will be a Father unto them.

Notice how Abraham states the question. In effect, he argues it thus: *this would be to forego the divine order.* "For," says Abraham, "the Lord God of heaven took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred." What, then, if he brought Abraham out, is Isaac to return? This cannot be. Hitherto the way of God with his church has been to sever a people from the world to be his elect—a people formed for himself, who shall show forth his praise. Beloved, God's plan is not altered. He will still go on calling those whom he did predestinate. Do not let us fly in the teeth of that fact, and suppose that we can save men on a more wholesale scale by ignoring the distinction between the dead in sin and the living in Zion. If God had meant to bless the family at Padan-aram by letting his chosen ones dwell among them, why did he call Abraham out at all? If Isaac may do good by dwelling there, why did Abraham leave? If there is no need of a separate church now, what have we been at throughout all these ages? Has the martyr's blood been shed out of mere folly? Have confessors and reformers been mad when contending for doctrines which, it would seem, are of no great account? Brethren, there are two seeds—the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent—and the difference will be maintained even to the end; neither must we ignore the distinction to please men.

For Isaac to go down to Nahor's house for a wife *would be placing God second to a wife.* Abraham begins at once with a reference to Jehovah, "the God of heaven"; for Jehovah was everything to him, and to Isaac also. Isaac would never renounce his walk with the living God that he might find a wife. Yet this apostasy is common enough nowadays. Men and women who profess godliness will quit what they profess to believe in order to get richer wives or husbands for themselves or their children. This mercenary conduct is without excuse. "Better society" is the cry—meaning more wealth and fashion. To the true man God is first—yea, all in all; but God is placed at the fag-end, and everything else is put before him by the base professor. In the name of God I call upon you who are faithful to God and to his truth, to stand fast, whatever you lose, and turn not aside, whatever you might gain. Count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. We want Abraham's spirit within us, and we shall have that when we have Abraham's faith.

Abraham felt that this would be *to renounce the covenant promise.* See how he puts it: "The God that took me from my father's house sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land." Are

they, then, to leave the land, and go back to the place from which the Lord had called them? Brethren, we also are heirs of the promise of things not seen as yet. For the sake of this we walk by faith, and hence we become separate from those around us. We dwell among men as Abraham dwelt among the Canaanites; but we are of a distinct race: we are born with a new birth, live under different laws, and act from different motives. If we go back to the ways of worldlings, and are numbered with them, we have renounced the covenant of our God, the promise is no longer ours, and the eternal heritage is in other hands. Do you not know this? The moment the church says, "I will be as the world," she has doomed herself with the world. When the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose, then the flood came, and swept them all away. So will it again happen should the world take the church into its arms: then shall come some overwhelming judgment, and, it may be, a deluge of devouring fire. The covenant promise and the covenant heritage are no longer ours if we go down to the world and quit our sojourning with the Lord.

Besides, dear friends, *no good can come of trying to conform to the world.* Suppose the servant's policy could have been adopted, and Isaac had gone down to Nahor's house, what would have been the motive? To spare Rebekah the pain of separating from her friends, and the trouble of travelling. If those things could have kept her back, what would she have been worth to Isaac? The test of separation was wholesome, and by no means ought it to be omitted. She is a poor wife who would not take a journey to reach her husband. And all the converts that the church will ever make by softening down its doctrine, and by becoming worldly, will not be worth one bad farthing a gross. When we get them, the next question will be, "How can we get rid of them?" They would be of no earthly use to us. It swelled the number of Israelites when they came out of Egypt that a great number of the lower order of Egyptians came out with them. Yes, but that mixed multitude became the plague of Israel in the wilderness, and we read that "the mixt multitude fell a lusting." The Israelites were bad enough, but it was the mixed multitude that always led the way in murmuring. Why is there such spiritual death to-day? Why is false doctrine so rampant in the churches? It is because we have ungodly people in the church and in the ministry. Eagerness for numbers, and especially eagerness to include respectable people, has adulterated many churches, and made them lax in doctrine and practice, and fond of silly amusements. These are the people who despise a prayer-meeting, but rush to see "living waxworks" in their schoolrooms. God save us from converts who are made by lowering the standard, and tarnishing the spiritual glory of the church! No, no; if Isaac is to have a wife worthy of him, she will come away from Laban and the rest, and she will not mind a journey on camel-back. True converts are never daunted by truth or holiness—these, in fact, are the things which charm them.

Besides, Abraham felt that *there could be no reason for taking Isaac down there*, for the Lord would assuredly find him a wife. Abraham said, "He shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt

take a wife unto my son from thence." Are you afraid that preaching the gospel will not win souls? Are you despondent as to success in God's way? Is this why you pine for clever oratory? Is this why you must have music, and architecture, and flowers, and millinery? After all, is it by might and by power, and not by the Spirit of God? It is even so in the opinion of many. Brethren beloved, there are many things which I might allow to other worshippers which I have denied myself in conducting the worship of this congregation. I have long worked out before your very eyes the experiment of the unaided attractiveness of the gospel of Jesus. Our service is severely plain. No man ever comes hither to gratify his eye with art, or his ear with music. I have set before you, these many years, nothing but Christ crucified, and the simplicity of the gospel; yet where will you find such a crowd as this gathered together this morning? Where will you find such a multitude as this meeting, Sabbath after Sabbath, for five-and-thirty years? I have shown you nothing but the cross, the cross without the flowers of oratory, the cross without the blue lights of superstition or excitement, the cross without diamonds of ecclesiastical rank, the cross without the buttresses of a boastful science. It is abundantly sufficient to attract men first to itself, and afterwards to eternal life! In this house we have proved successfully, these many years, this great truth, that the gospel plainly preached will gain an audience, convert sinners, and build up and sustain a church. We beseech the people of God to mark that there is no need to try doubtful expedients and questionable methods. God will save by the gospel still: only let it be the gospel in its purity. This grand old sword will cleave a man's chine, and split a rock in halves. How is it that it does so little of its old conquering work? I will tell you. Do you see this scabbard of artistic work, so wonderfully elaborated? Full many keep the sword in this scabbard, and therefore its edge never gets to its work. Pull off that scabbard. Fling that fine sheath to Hades, and then see how, in the Lord's hands, that glorious two-handed sword will mow down fields of men as mowers level the grass with their scythes. There is no need to go down to Egypt for help. To invite the devil to help Christ is shameful. Please God, we shall see prosperity yet, when the church of God is resolved never to seek it except in God's own way.

V. And now, fifthly, observe HIS RIGHTEOUS ABSOLUTION OF HIS SERVANT. "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again."

When we lie a-dying, if we have faithfully preached the gospel, our conscience will not accuse us for having kept closely to it: we shall not mourn that we did not play the fool or the politician in order to increase our congregation. Oh, no! our Master will give us full absolution, even if few be gathered in, so long as we have been true to him. "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only bring not my son thither again." Do not try the dodges which debase religion. Keep to the simple gospel; and if the people are not converted by it, you will be clear. My dear hearers, how much I long to see you saved! But I would

not belie my Lord, even to win your souls, if they could be so won. The true servant of God is responsible for diligence and faithfulness; but he is not responsible for success or non-success. Results are in God's hands. If that dear child in your class is not converted, yet if you have set before him the gospel of Jesus Christ with loving, prayerful earnestness, you shall not be without your reward. If I preach from my very soul the grand truth that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will save my hearers, and if I persuade and entreat them to believe in Jesus unto eternal life; if they will not do so, their blood will lie upon their own heads. When I go back to my Master, if I have faithfully told out his message of free grace and dying love, I shall be clear. I have often prayed that I might be able to say at the last what George Fox could so truly say: "I am clear, I am clear!" It is my highest ambition to be clear of the blood of all men. I have preached God's truth, so far as I know it, and I have not been ashamed of its peculiarities. That I might not stultify my testimony I have cut myself clear of those who err from the faith, and even from those who associate with them. What more can I do to be honest with you? If, after all, men will not have Christ, and his gospel, and his rule, it is their own concern. If Rebekah had not come to Isaac she would have lost her place in the holy line. My beloved hearer, will you have Jesus Christ or not? He has come into the world to save sinners, and he casts out none. Will you accept him? Will you trust him? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Will you believe him? Will you be baptized into his name? If so, salvation is yours; but if not, he himself hath said it, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Oh, do not expose yourselves to that damnation! Or, if you are set upon it; then, when the great white throne shall be seen in yonder skies, and the day of wrath has come, do me the justice to acknowledge that I bade you flee to Jesus, and that I did not amuse you with novel theories. I have brought neither flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, nor any other kind of music to please your ears, but I have set Christ crucified before you, and bidden you *believe and live*. If you refuse to accept the substitution of Christ, you have refused your own mercies. Clear me in that day of all complicity with the novel inventions of deluded men. As for my Lord, I pray of him grace to be faithful to the end, both to his truth, and to your souls. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis xxiv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—166, 928, 884.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A LIFE-LONG OCCUPATION.

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, October 14th, 1888, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."—Hebrews xiii. 15.

It is instructive to notice where this verse stands. The connection is a golden setting to the gem of the text. Here we have a description of the believer's position before God. He has done with all carnal ordinances, and has no interest in the ceremonies of the Mosaic law. Brethren, as believers in Jesus, who is the substance of all the outward types, we have, henceforth, nothing to do with altars of gold or of stone: our worship is spiritual, and our altar spiritual.

"We rear no altar, Christ has died;
We deck no priestly shrine."

What then? Are we to offer no sacrifice? Very far from it. We are called upon to offer to God a continual sacrifice. Instead of presenting in the morning and the evening a sacrifice of lambs, and on certain holy days bringing bullocks and sheep to be slain, we are to present to God continually the sacrifice of praise. Having done with the outward, we now give ourselves entirely to the inward and to the spiritual. Do you see your calling, brethren?

Moreover, the believer is now, if he is where he ought to be, like his Master, "without the camp." "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." What then? If we are without the camp, have we nothing to do? Are we cut off from God as well as from men? Shall we fume and fret because we are not of the world? On the contrary, let us the more ardently pursue higher objects, and yield up our disentangled spirits to the praise and glory of God.

Do we come under contempt, as the Master did? Is it so, that we are "bearing his reproach"? Shall we sit down in despair? Shall we be crushed beneath this burden? Nay, verily; while we lose honour ourselves, we will ascribe honour to our God. We will count it all joy that we are counted worthy to be reproached for Christ's sake. Let us now praise God continually. Let the fruit of our lips be a still bolder confession of his name. Let us more and more

earnestly make known his glory and his grace. If reproach be bitter, praise is sweet: we will drown the drops of gall in a sea of honey. If to have our name cast out as evil should seem to be derogatory to us, let us all the more see to it that we give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. While the enemy reproaches us continually, our only reply shall be to offer the sacrifice of praise continually unto the Lord our God.

Moreover, the apostle says that "Here we have no continuing city." Well, then, we will transfer the continuance from the city to the praise—"Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." If everything here is going, let it go; but we will not cease to sing. If the end of all things is at hand, let them end; but our praises of the living God shall abide world without end. Set free from all the hamper of citizenship here below, we will begin the employment of citizens of heaven. It is not ours to arrange a new Socialism, nor to set up to be dividers of heritages; we belong to a kingdom which is not of this world, a city of God eternal in the heavens. It is not ours to pursue the dreams of politicians, but to offer the sacrifices of God-ordained priests. As we are not of this world, it is ours to seek the world to come, and press forward to the place where the saints in Christ shall reign for ever and ever.

You see then, brethren, that the text is rather an unexpected one in its connection; but when properly viewed, it is the fittest that could be. The more we are made to feel that we are strangers in a strange land, the more should we addict ourselves to the praises of God, with whom we sojourn. Crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us, let us spend and be spent in the praises of him who is our sole trust and joy. Oh, to praise God, and still to praise him, and never to be taken off from praising him, let the world do what it may!

This morning my great business will be to stir you up, dear friends, as many of you as have been made kings and priests unto God by Jesus Christ, to exercise your holy office. I shall, to that end, first, concerning the Christian, *describe his sacrifice;* secondly, *examine its substance;* thirdly, *commend its exercise;* and fourthly, *commence it at once.*

I. First, then, concerning a believer, let me DESCRIBE HIS SACRIFICE.

"By him therefore." See, at the very threshold of all offering of sacrifice to God, *we begin with Christ.* We cannot go a step without Jesus. Without a Mediator we can make no advance to God. Apart from Christ there is no acceptable prayer, no pleasing sacrifice of any sort. "By him therefore"—we cannot move a lip acceptably without him who suffered without the gate. The great High Priest of our profession meets us at the sanctuary door, and we place all our sacrifices into his hands, that he may present them for us. You do not wish it to be otherwise, I am quite sure. If you could do anything without him, you would feel afraid to do it. You only feel safe when he is with you, and you are "accepted in the beloved." Be thankful that at the beginning of your holy service your eyes are turned towards your Lord. You are to offer continual sacrifice, looking unto Jesus. Behold our great Melchizedek meets us! Let us give him tithes of all, and receive his blessing, which will repay us a thousand-fold.

Let us never venture upon a sacrifice apart from him, lest it be the sacrifice of Cain, or the sacrifice of fools. He is that altar which sanctifies both gift and giver; by him therefore let our sacrifices both of praise and of almsgiving be presented unto God.

Next, observe that *this sacrifice is to be presented continually.* "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*." Attentively treasure up that word. It will not do for you to say, "We have been exhorted to praise God on the Sabbath-day." No, I have not exhorted you to such occasional duty; "continually," says the text, and that means seven days in a week. I would not have you say, "He means that we are to praise God in the morning when we awake, and in the evening before we fall asleep." Do that, my brethren, unfailingly; but that is not what I have to set before you. "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*"—"*continually*" that is to say, without ceasing. Let us make an analogous precept to that which saith, "pray without ceasing," and say, "praise without ceasing." Not only in this place or that place, but in every place, we are to praise the Lord our God. Not only when we are in a happy frame of mind, but when we are cast-down and troubled. The perfumed smoke from the altar of incense is to rise towards heaven both day and night, from the beginning of the year to the year's end. Not only when we are in the assembly of the saints are we to praise God, but when we are called to pass through Vanity Fair, where sinners congregate. Bless the Lord at all times. Not alone in your secret chamber, which is redolent with the perfume of your communion with God; but yonder in the field, and there in the street, ay, and in the hurry and noise of the Exchange, offer the sacrifice of praise to God. You cannot always be speaking his praise, but you can always be living his praise. The heart once set on praising God will, like the stream which leaps adown the mountain's side, continue still to flow in its chosen course. A soul saturated with divine gratitude will continue, almost unconsciously, to give forth the sacred odour of praise, which will permeate the atmosphere of every place, and make itself known to all who have a spiritual nostril with which to discern sweetness. There is no moment in which it would be right to suspend the praises of God: let us therefore offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually.* This should be done, not only by some of us—pastor, elders, deacons, and special workers—but by all of you. The apostle says, "Let *us*"; and therein he calls upon all of us who have any participation in the great sacrifice of Christ to go with him without the camp, and then and there to stand with him in our places, and continually offer the sacrifice of praise unto God. You see, then, that the two important points are—always, and always through Christ.

The apostle goes on to tell us what the sacrifice is—*the sacrifice of praise.* Praise, that is, heart-worship, or adoration. Adoration is the grandest form of earthly service. We ascribe unto Jehovah, the one living and true God, all honour and glory. When we see his works, when we hear his Word, when we taste his grace, when we mark his providence, when we think upon his name, our spirit bows in the lowliest reverence before him, and magnifies him as the all-glorious

Lord. Let us abide continually in the spirit of adoration, for this is praise in its purest form.

Praise is heart-trust and heart-content with God. Trust is adoration applied to practical purposes. Let us go into the world trusting God, believing that he orders all things well, resolving to do everything as he commands, for neither his character, nor his decrees, nor his commandments are grievous to us. We delight in the Lord as he is pleased to reveal himself, let that revelation be what it may. We believe not only that God is, but that he is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek him: let us so praise him that we shall not be baffled if our good work brings us no immediate recompense; for we are satisfied that he is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith. Let us praise him by being perfectly satisfied with anything and everything that he does or appoints. Let us take a hallowed delight in him, and in all that concerns him. Let him be to us "God, our exceeding joy." Do you know what it is to delight yourselves in God? Then, in that continual satisfaction, offer him continual praise. Life is no longer sorrowful, even amid sorrow, when God is in it, its soul and crown. It is worth while to live the most afflicted and tried life, so long as we know God, and taste his love. Let him do what seemeth him good, so long as he will but be a God to us, and permit us to call him our Father and our God.

Praise is heart-enjoyment; the indulgence of gratitude and wonder. The Lord has done so much for me that I must praise him, or feel as if I had a fire shut up within me. I may speak for many of you, for you also are saying, "He has done great things for us." Brethren, the Lord has favoured you greatly: before the earth was, he chose you, and entered into covenant with you: he gave you to his Son, and gave his Son to you. He has manifested himself to you as he doth not to the world; even now he breathes a child-like spirit into you, whereby you cry, "Abba, Father." Surely you must praise him! How can you ever satisfy the cravings of your heart if you do not extol him? Your obligations rise above you as high as the heavens above the earth. The vessel of your soul has foundered in this sea of love, and gone down fifty fathoms deep in it. High over its masthead the main ocean of eternal mercy is rolling with its immeasurable billows of grace. You are swallowed up in the fathomless abyss of infinite love. You are absorbed in adoring wonder and affection. Like Leah when Judah was born, you cry, "Now will I praise the Lord."

Have you not, in addition to this, the praise of heart-feeling, while within you burns an intense love to God? Could you love anyone as you love God? After you have poured out the stream of your love upon the dearest earthly ones, do you not feel you have something more within, which all created vessels could not contain? The heart of man yields love without stint, and the stream is too large for the lake into which it flows, so long as we love a created being. Only the infinite God can ever contain all the love of a loving heart. There is a fitness for the heart, and a fulness for its emotions when Jehovah is the heart's one object of love. My God, I love thee! Thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. Instead of cavilling at the

Lord because of certain stern truths which we read concerning him, we are enabled in these to worship him by bowing our reason to his revelation. That which we cannot understand we nevertheless believe, and believing, we adore. It is not ours to arraign the Almighty, but to submit to him. We are not his censors, but his servants. We do not legislate, but love. He is good, supremely good in our esteem: and infinitely blessed of our hearts. We do not consider what he ought to be; but we learn what he is, and as such we love and adore him. Thus have I gone roundabout the shell of praise; but what it really is you must each one know for himself.

The text evidently deals with *spoken praise*—"Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name"; or, as the Revised Version has it, "the fruit of lips which make confession to his name." So, then, we are *to utter* the praises of God, and it is not sufficient *to feel* adoring emotions. The priesthood of believers requires them to praise God with their lips. Should we not sing a great deal more than we do? Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs should abound in our homes. It is our duty to sing as much as possible; we should praise as much as we pray. "I have no voice!" saith one. Cultivate it till you have. "But mine is a cracked voice!" Ah, well! it may be cracked to human ears, and yet be melodious unto God. To him the music lies in the heart, not in the sound. Praise the Lord with song and psalm. Some few godly men whom I have known have gone about the fields and along the roads humming sacred songs continually. These are the troubadours and minstrels of our King. Happy profession! May more of us become such birds of Paradise! Hear how the ungodly world pours out its mirth! Ofttimes their song is so silly as to be utterly devoid of meaning. Are they not ashamed? Then let us not be ashamed. Children of God, sing the songs of Zion, and let your hearts be joyful before your King. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

But if we cannot sing so well or so constantly as we would desire, let us talk. We cannot say that we cannot talk. Perhaps some might be better if they could not talk quite so much. As we can certainly talk continually, let us as continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise, by speaking well of his name. Talk ye of all his wondrous works. Let us abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness. Let us praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Many whom you judge to be irreligious would be greatly interested if you were to relate to them the story of God's love to you. But if they are not interested, you are not responsible for that; only tell it as often as you have opportunity. We charge you, as Jesus did the healed man, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." Speak, and speak, and speak again, for the instruction of others: for the confirmation of those who have faith, and for the routing of the doubts of those who believe not. Tell what God has done for you. Does not our conversation want more flavouring with the praise of God? We put into it too much vinegar of complaint, and forget the sugar of gratitude. This year, when the harvest seems to have been snatched from between the jaws of the destroyer, our friends say, "Well, things look a shade

better"; and I am glad to get them up even as high as that. Hear the general talk: "Things are very bad. Business is dreadful. Trade never was so bad." When I was a boy things were very bad, never were so bad; and I think ever since they have been so bad that they could not be worse, and yet somehow people live, and even farmers are not all turned to skin and bone. Surely, surely, we had better mend our talk, and speak more brightly and cheerily of what God does for us! How can we offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually if we perpetually rail at his providence? Christian men, if you are ever driven to a murmur, let it be the momentary mistake of your extremity; but come back again to contentment and gratitude, which is your proper and acceptable condition. Hear the word of the Lord, which saith, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer."

In fine, praise means this, that you and I are appointed to tell out the goodness of God, just as the birds of spring wake up before the sun and begin singing, and singing, and singing, all of them, with all their might. Become ye the choristers of God. Praise ye the Lord evermore, even as they do who, with songs and choral symphonies, day without night, circle his throne rejoicing. This is your office, and it is a holy and a privileged one.

"Well," saith one, "I cannot force myself to praise." I do not want you to force yourself to it: *this praise is to be natural.* It is called the fruit of the lips. In the Book of Hosea, from which the apostle quotes, our version reads, "The calves of our lips." Whether the word is "calves" in the Hebrew original or not, is a matter in dispute; but the translators of the Septuagint certainly read it "fruit," and this seems more clear and plain. The apostle, quoting it from the Greek translation, has endorsed it as being correct. These lips of ours must produce fruit. Our words are leaves: how soon they wither! The praise of God is the fruit which can be stored up and presented to the Lord. Fruit is a natural product: it grows without force, the free outcome of the plant. So let praise grow out of your lips at its own sweet will. Let it be as natural to you, as regenerated men and women, to praise God as it seems to be natural to profane men to blaspheme the sacred name.

This praise is to be sincere and real. The next verse tells us we are to do good and communicate, and joins this with praise to God. Many will give God a cataract of words, but scarce a drop of true gratitude in the form of substance consecrated. When I am pressed with many cares about the Lord's work, I often wish that some of my brethren would be a little more mindful of its pecuniary needs. I should be much relieved if those who can spare it would help different portions of our home service. It should be the joy of a Christian to use his substance in his Master's service. When we are in a right state of heart we do not want anybody to call upon us to extract a subscription from us, but we go and ask, "Is there anything that wants help?" Is any part of the Lord's business in need just now? The great works, such as the Orphanage and College, are provided for; but I often sigh as I see lesser agencies left without help, not because friends would not aid if they were pressed to do so, but because there is not a ready

mind to look out for opportunities. Yet that ready mind is the very fat of the sacrifice. I long to see everywhere Christian friends who will not stay to be asked, but will make the Lord's business their business, and take in hand some branch of work in the church, or among the poor, or for the spread of the gospel. Brethren, let your gift be an outburst of a free and gracious spirit, which takes a delight in showing that it does not praise God in word only, but in deed and in truth. In this church let us excel in generous gifts. As the year ripens to its close see that everything is provided in the house of the Lord, and that there is no lack in any quarter. This practical praising of the Lord is the life-office of every true believer. See ye to it.

II. We will, secondly, for a few minutes EXAMINE THE SUBSTANCE OF THIS SACRIFICE. "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually."

To praise God continually will need *a childlike faith in him.* You must believe his word, or you will not praise his name. Doubt snaps the harp-strings. Question mars all melody. Trust him, lean on him, enjoy him—you will never praise him else. Unbelief is the deadly enemy of praise.

Faith must lead you into *personal communion with the Lord.* It is to him that the praise is offered, and not to our fellow-men. The most beautiful singing in the world, if it be intended for the ears of musical critics, is nothing worth. Only that is praise which is meant for God. O thou my Lord, my song shall find thee! Every part of my being shall have its attribute to sing. I will sing unto the Lord, and unto the Lord alone. You must live in fellowship with God, or you cannot praise him.

You must have also an overflowing content, *a real joy in him.* Dear brothers and sisters, be sure that you do not lose your joy. If you ever lose the joy of religion, you will lose the power of religion. Do not be satisfied to be a miserable believer. An unhappy believer is a poor creature; but he who is resigned to being so is in a dangerous condition. Depend upon it, greater importance attaches to holy happiness than most people think. As you are happy in the Lord you will be able to praise his name. Rejoice in the Lord, that you may praise him.

There must also be *a holy earnestness* about this. Praise is called a sacrifice because it is a very sacred and solemn thing. People who came to the altar with their victims came there with the hush of reverence, the trembling of awe. We cannot praise God with levity. He is in heaven, and we are upon the earth: he is thrice holy, and we are sinful: we must put off our shoe in lowly reverence, and worship with intense adoration, or else he cannot be pleased with our sacrifices. When life is real, life is earnest: and it must be both real and earnest when it is spent to the praise of the great and ever-blessed God.

To praise God continually, you need to cultivate *perpetual gratitude*, and surely it cannot be hard to do that! Remember, every misery averted is a mercy bestowed; every sin forgiven is a favour granted; every duty performed is also a grace received. The people of God have an inexhaustible treasury of good things provided for them by the infinite God, and for all this they should praise him. I

pray you, be not only a little grateful, but overflow with it. Let your praises be like the waters of fountains which are abundantly supplied. Let the stream leap up to heaven in bursts of enthusiasm; let it fall to earth again in showers of beneficence; let it fill the basin of your daily life, and run over into the lives of others, and thence again in a cataract of glittering joy let it still descend.

In order to this praise you will need *a deep and ardent admiration of the Lord God.* Admire the Father—think much of his love; acquaint yourself with his perfections. Admire the Son of God, the altogether lovely One; and as you mark his gentleness, self-denial, love, and grace, suffer your heart to be wholly enamoured of him. Admire the patience and condescension of the Holy Ghost, that he should visit you, and dwell in you, and bear with you. It cannot be difficult to the sanctified and instructed heart to be filled with a great admiration of the Lord God. This is the raw material of praise. An intelligent admiration of God, kindled into flame by gratitude, and fanned by delight and joy, must ever produce praise. Living in personal converse with God, and trusting him as a child trusts its father, it cannot be difficult for the soul continually to offer the sacrifice of praise to God through Jesus Christ.

III. I have been very brief upon that point because I want, in the third place, to COMMEND THIS BLESSED EXERCISE.

"Offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually," because in so doing *you will answer the end of your being.* Every creature is happiest when it is doing what it is made for. A bird that is made to fly abroad pines in a cage; an eagle would die in the water, even as a fish that is made to swim perishes on the river's bank. Christians are made to glorify God; and we are never in our element till we are praising him. The happiest moments you have ever spent were those in which you lost sight of everything inferior, and bowed before Jehovah's throne of light with reverent joy and blissful praise. I can say it is so with me, and I doubt not it is so with you. When your whole soul is full of praise, you have at last reached the goal that your heart is aiming at. Your ship is now in full sail: your car is on the tram-lines. Your life moves smoothly and safely on. This is the groove along which it was made to slide. Before, you were trying to do what you were not made to do; but now you are at home. For the praise of God your new nature was fashioned, and it finds rest therein. Keep to this work. Do not degrade yourself by a less divine employ.

Praise God again, because *it is his due.* Should Jehovah be left unpraised? Praise is the quit-rent which he asks of us for the enjoyment of all things; shall we be slow to pay? Will a man rob God? When it is such a happy work to give him his due, shall we deny it? It blesses us to bless the Lord. Shall we stint God in the measure of his glory? He does not stint us in his goodness. Come, my brother, my sister, if you have become sorrowful of late, shake off your gloom, and awake all your instruments of music to praise the Lord! Let not murmuring and complaining be so much as mentioned among saints. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. Shall not the Lord be praised? Surely the very stones and rocks must break their

everlasting silence in indignation if the children of God do not praise his name.

Praise him, dear brethren, continually, for *it will help you in everything else.* A man full of praise is ready for all other holy exercises. Such is my bodily pain and weakness, that I could not have forced myself to preach this morning if I had not felt that I must come hither to bid you praise God. I thought that my pain might give emphasis to my words. I do praise the Lord: I must praise him. It is a duty which I hope to perform in my last moments, the Holy Spirit helping me. So you see praise helps me to preach. Whenever you go forth to any service, even though it be nothing better than taking down the shutters, and waiting behind the counter, you will do it all the better for being in the spirit of praise and gratitude. If you are a domestic servant, and can praise God continually, you will be a comfort in the house; and if you are a master, and are surrounded with the troubles of life, if your heart is always blessing the Lord, you will keep up your spirits, and you will not be sharp and ill-tempered with those around you. Come, brethren, this is both meat and medicine—this praising the Lord. Ye birds of heaven, strange to say, this singing will plume your wings for flight! The praises of God put wings upon pilgrims' heels, so that they not only run, but fly.

This will *preserve us from many evils.* When the heart is full of the praise of God, it has not time to find fault and grow proudly angry with its fellows. Somebody has said a very nasty thing about us. Well, well; we will answer him when we have got through the work we have in hand, namely, praising God continually. At present we have a great work to do, and cannot come down to wrangle. Self-love and its natural irritations die in the blaze of praise. If you praise God continually, the vexations and troubles of life will be cheerfully borne. Praise makes the happy man the strong man. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Praising God makes us to drink of the brook by the way, and lift up the head. We cannot fear while we can praise. Neither can we be bribed by the world's favour, nor cowed by its frown. Praise makes men, yea, angels of us: let us abound in it.

Brethren, let us praise God because *it will be a means of usefulness.* I believe that a life spent in God's praise would in itself be a missionary life. That matronly sister who never delivered a sermon, nor even a lecture, in all her days, has lived a quiet, happy, useful, loving life, and her family have learned from her to trust the Lord. Even when she shall have passed away, they will feel her influence, for she was the angel of the house. Being dead, she yet will speak. A praiseful heart is eloquent for God. Mere verbiage, what is it but as autumn leaves, which will be consumed in smothering smoke? But praise is golden fruit to be presented in baskets of silver unto the dresser of the vineyard.

Praise God, brethren, because *this is what God loves.* Notice how the next verse puts it: "With such sacrifices God is well pleased." Would we not do anything and everything to please God? It seems too good to be true that we can impart any pleasure to the ever-blessed One; yet it is so, for he hath declared that he is well pleased

with the praises and the gifts of his children. Therefore let us withhold nothing from our dear Father, our blessed God. Can I please him? Tell me what it is, I will do it straight away. I will not deliberate, but without reserve make haste. If I deliberate, it shall be that I may make the service twice as large, or perform it in more careful style; for if I may praise him, it shall be honour, yea, it shall be heaven to me.

To close this commendation, remember that *this will fit you for heaven.* Our hymn expresses a frequent aspiration—

> "I would begin the music here,
> And so my soul should rise."

You can begin the music here—begin the hallelujahs of glory by praising God here below. Think of how you will praise him when you see his face, and never, never sin. Exceedingly magnify the Lord even now, and rehearse the music of the skies. In glory you may rise to a higher key, but let the song be the same even here. Praise him! Praise him! Praise him more and more! Rise on rounds of praise up the ladder of his glory, till you reach the top, and are with him to praise him better than ever before. Oh, that our lives may not be broken, but may be all of a piece: one psalm, for ever rising, verse by verse, into the eternal hallelujahs!

IV. I have brought you thus far, and so I come to the closing point, which is, LET US COMMENCE AT ONCE. What does the text say? It says, "Let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise continually." The apostle does not say, "By-and-by get to this work, when you are able to give up business, and have retired to the country, or when you are near to die;" but now, at once, he says, "Let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise."

Listen! Who is speaking? Whose voice do I hear? Ah! I know, it is the apostle Paul. He says, "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise"! Where are you, Paul? His voice sounds from within a low place. I believe he is shut up in a dungeon. Lift up your hand, O venerable Paul! I can hear the clanking of a fetter. Yes; Paul cries, "Let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise. I, Paul the aged, in prison in Rome, wish you to join with me in a sacrifice of praise to God." Amen. We will do so. O Paul, we are not in prison, and we are not all aged, and none of us are galled with fetters on our wrists; but we can join heartily with you in praising God this morning; and we do so. Come, let *us* praise God.

> "Stand up and bless the Lord,
> Ye people of his choice;
> Stand up and bless the Lord your God,
> With heart and soul and voice."

You have heard Paul's voice, now hear mine. Join with me, and let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise. Brothers and sisters, we have known each other for many a year, and we have worked together in different ways for the Lord; and as a church and people we have received great favours from the Lord's hand. Come, let us join together with heart and hand to bless the name of the Lord, and worship joyfully before him. With words and with gifts let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually. If I were to select certain of the

members, and call upon them one by one, I should say, "Come, brother So-and-so, let us offer the sacrifice of praise." I am sure that the brother would get up, and unite with me very cordially, as in a brotherly duet we praised the Lord our God. I will not at this present call upon any of you; but if I did say, "Sister So-and-so, let us offer praise to God," many of you would reply, "Ah, Pastor! if nobody else can praise him, we can, and we will." Well, well, kindly take it as done, so far as the outward expression is concerned; but inwardly let us at once offer the sacrifice of praise to God by Jesus Christ. Let us stir one another up to praise. Let us spend to-day, and to-morrow, and all the rest of our days in praising God. If we catch one another a little grumbling, or coldly silent, let us, in kindness to each other, give the needful rebuke. It will not do; we must praise the Lord. Just as the leader of an orchestra taps his baton to call all to attention, and then to begin singing, so I this morning arouse you and bestir you to offer the sacrifice of praise unto the Lord.

The apostle has put us rather in a fix: he compels us to offer sacrifice. Did you notice what he said in the tenth verse? He says, "We have an altar." It is not a material altar, but a spiritual one; yet "we have an altar." May the priests of the old law offer sacrifice on it? Answer, "Whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle." They ate of the sacrifices laid on the altars of the old law, but they have no right here. Those who keep to ritualistic performances, and outward ceremonials, have no right here. Yet we have an altar. Brothers and sisters, can we imagine that this altar is given us of the Lord to be never used? Is no sacrifice to be presented on the best of altars? We have an altar—what then? If we have an altar, do not allow it to be neglected, deserted, unused. It is not for spiders to spin their webs upon; it is not meet that it should be smothered with the dust of neglect. "We have an altar." What then? "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." Do you not see the force of the argument. Practically obey it.

Beside the altar we have a High Priest. There is the Lord Jesus Christ, dressed in his robes of glory and beauty, standing within the veil at this moment, ready to present our offerings. Shall he stand there, and have nothing to do? What would you think of our great High Priest waiting at the altar, with nothing to present which his redeemed had brought to God? No, "by him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." Bring hither abundantly, ye people of God, your praises, your prayers, your thank-offerings, and present them to the Ever-blessed!

Well may you do so if you will read the connection; for the passage brings before you many things which should compel you to praise God. Behold your Saviour in his passion, offered without the gate! Gaze upon his five bleeding wounds, his sacred head so wounded, his face so full of anguish, his heart bursting with the agony of sin! Can you see that sight, and not praise God? Behold redemption accomplished, sin pardoned, salvation purchased, hell vanquished, death abolished, and all this achieved by your blessed Lord and Master! Can you see all this, and not praise him? His precious

blood falling on you, and making you clean, bringing you near to God, making you acceptable before the infinite holiness of the Most High! Can you see yourself thus favoured, and behold the precious blood which did it, and not praise his name?

Yonder in the distance, seen dimly, perhaps, but yet not doubtfully, behold "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." White-robed, the purified are singing to their golden harps, and you will soon be there. When a few more days or years are passed, you will be among the glorified. A crown and a harp are reserved for you. Will you not begin to praise God, and glorify him for the heaven which is in store for you? With these two sights so wonderfully contrasted—the Passion and the Paradise—Jesus in his humiliation and Jesus in his glory; and yourself a sharer in both these wondrous scenes—surely if you do not begin to offer the perpetual sacrifice of thanksgivings and praise unto God, you must be something harder than stone. God grant us to commence this day those praises which shall never be suspended throughout eternity!

Oh, that you, who have never praised God before, would begin now! Alas! some of you have no Christ to praise, and no Saviour to bless. Yet you need not so abide. By faith you may lay hold upon Jesus, and he then becomes yours. Trust him, and he will justify your trust. Rest in the Lord, and the Lord is your rest. When you have trusted, then waste no time, but at once commence the business for which you were created, and redeemed, and called. Fill the censer with the sweet spices of gratitude and love, and lay on the burning coals of earnestness, and fervency. Then, when praise begins to rise from you like pillars of smoke, swing the censer to and fro in the presence of the Most High, and more and more laud, bless, and magnify the Lord that liveth for ever. Let your heart dance at the sound of his name, and let your lips show forth his salvation. The Lord anoint you this day to the priesthood of praise, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews xiii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—176, 103 (Vers. II.), 775.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

DRIVING OUT THE CANAANITES AND THEIR IRON CHARIOTS.*

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 12TH, 1888, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong."—Joshua xvii. 18.

WHEN the children of Israel had come to Canaan, and by God's good care had entered into the land that flowed with milk and honey, they were not immediately at rest, for the Canaanites were there—there in possession, there in strong cities, which seemed to be walled up to heaven; and they had to drive out these Canaanites before they could possibly possess the country. In fact, this was the reason why they were sent there. The Canaanites had been outlawed of God. They had been guilty of such horrible offences that he had adjudged their race to destruction. It was necessary for the purity of the world that ancient races which had become so horribly depraved should be removed from it, and the Israelites were brought to the land, as the Lord's executioners, to smite the Canaanites, and exterminate them. Some have dared to speak of it as a hideous massacre; but being commanded of the great Judge, who has the power of life and death, it is to be solemnly regarded as a terrible execution for which there was a stern necessity. We may rest well assured that he who commissioned his officers to slay had the most urgent reason for the employment of their swords. God knew best what was needful for the morals of the world, and he came to the conclusion that the iniquity of the Amorites was full, and that they could not be longer endured. The Israelites could not, therefore, enter upon their inheritance without first driving out the aboriginal races, since these had become the adversaries both of God and man.

You will see, then, dear friends, that Canaan is hardly a full type of heaven. It may be used so in a modified sense; but it is a far better emblem of that state and condition of soul in which a man is found when he has become a believer, and by believing has entered into rest, but not into an absolutely perfect deliverance from sin. He has come

* On this occasion several soldiers from Woolwich were baptized in the Tabernacle.

to take possession of the covenant heritage, but finds the Canaanite of sin and evil still in the land, both in the form of original sin within, and of temptation from without. Before he can fully enjoy his privileges he must drive out his sins. It is absolutely needful, before he can experience the blessings of the covenant of grace to the full, that he should contend with the iniquities and evils which are within him and around him. He must drive out the various tribes of enemies which, for a long time, have been dwellers in the land of his nature. No doubt, many young Christians think that, when they are converted, the warfare is all over. No, the battle has just begun. You have not come to the winning-post: you have only come to the starting-point. You have entered upon the land in which you will have to fight, and wrestle, and weep, and pray, until you get the victory. That victory will be yours, but you will have to agonize to obtain it. He that has brought you into this condition will not fail you nor forsake you; but, at the same time, not without strong contentions and earnest strivings will you be able to win your inheritance. Be not deluded with the idea that you may sit down at your ease, for the very reverse will happen to the true heir of heaven.

I speak at this time to many who understand the meaning of spiritual warfare, and I scarcely need remind them that they are called to be men at arms, and not men at ease. I speak to some, perhaps, who do not yet understand much of warfare; but they will know before long, for no believer's sword will long sleep in its scabbard. Sin is a powerful enemy; and if you are a child of God, you will have to fight against it. If you are an heir of the true Canaan, you are born first to a heritage of warfare, and ultimately to the vast inheritance of unbroken and everlasting peace.

"The land of triumph lies on high,
There are no fields of battle there;
Lord, I would conquer till I die,
And finish all the glorious war."

Our text is a war-speech to the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. Joshua said to them, "Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only." But he told them that while he gave them two lots, they would have to drive out those who were then in possession:—"Thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong." May the Holy Spirit inspirit us for our life-struggles by the meditations of this hour!

I. Our first reflection shall be—WE MUST DRIVE THEM OUT. It is a command from God—"Thou shalt drive out the Canaanites." Every sin has to be slaughtered. Not a single sin is to be tolerated. Off with their heads! Drive the sword into their hearts! They are all to die. Not one of them may be spared. The whole race is to be exterminated, and so buried that not a bone of them can be found. Here is a labour worthy of all the valour of faith and the power of love.

They must all be driven out, for, *every sin is our enemy*. I hope we have no enemies in this world among our fellow-men. It takes two to make a quarrel; and if we will not contend, there can be no contention. We are neither to give nor to take offence; but if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, we are to live peaceably with all men. I trust

that we have forgiven everybody who has ever harmed us, and would desire to be forgiven by all against whom we have done anything wrong. But every sin, every evil, of every shape, is our true enemy, against which we are to wrestle to the bitter end. You cannot say to any sin, "You may dwell in my heart and be my friend." It cannot be your friend: evil is our natural and necessary enemy, and we must treat it as such. The seed of the woman will never find a friend in the seed of the serpent, any more than Eve found a friend in the serpent that beguiled her. Any pretence of friendship with iniquity is mischievous. If you are a friend of sin, you are not a friend of God. All sorts of sins are our enemies, and we are to hate them with our whole soul. If you can say of any sin, "I do not hate it," then you may gravely question whether you were ever born again. One of the marks of a child of God is that, although he sins, he does not love sin. He may fall into sin, but he is like a sheep which, if it tumbles into the mud, is quickly up again, for it hates the mire. The sow wallows where the sheep is distressed. Now, we are not the swine that love the slough, though we are as sheep that sometimes slip with their feet. Would to God that we never did slip! What a misery sin is to us! Evil is the worst of evils to godly men. The Lord send us all the sorrow he pleases: if he will but prevent our ever falling into sin, the greatest of our griefs will be away. Every sin hates us, and we hate every sin. There is no sin, dear friends, that can help you, in any case whatever; but it must seriously harm and hinder you. Sin is that ill wind which blows nobody any good. There is no beauty in sin. There is no comfort in sin. There is no strength in sin. There is nothing whatsoever good in sin. From the crown of its head to the sole of its foot it is all bruises and putrefying sores. There is nothing to be said in its favour; and I am sure that no heir of heaven would take up its cause and plead for it. It is evil, only evil, and that continually. While you hate sin, sin hates you. It will do you all the hurt it can; it will never be satisfied with the mischief that it has wrought you. It will try to lead you farther and farther into danger, so as to bring you down to hell. Sin would utterly destroy you, if it could, and it certainly could and would, if the grace of God did not prevent. Proclaim, then, a ceaseless warfare against all sin. Cry, "war to the knife with sin!" The Canaanites war with you; take care that you war with them. Up with the blood-red banner! Draw the sword, and never sheath it again. So long as there remains sin in our heart, or in our life, or in the world, it is to be fought against to the death.

Again, we should contend against all these Canaanites, and drive them out, for *sin is our Lord's most cruel enemy*. Jesus abhors all evil, and evil in every shape persecuted him. All sorts of sins he bore in his own body on the tree. From our sins, all of which were laid upon him, came the lashings of his back, when the ploughers ploughed deep furrows. From our sins came the bloody sweat that covered him from head to foot. From our sins came the crown of thorns, the nails, the spear, the vinegar and gall, and the dread death of agony. Sin—oh, how our Lord loathes it! In putting it away from us he drank of that cup from which, for a moment, he

started, saying, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" and this it was which caused him such an agony. Sin to Jesus was horror, torment, death. Jesus abhors sin with all the force of his holy nature. Saved by Jesus, will you not hate sin as he did? Would any person here lay up in his drawer as a treasure the knife with which his father was murdered? Our sins were the daggers that slew the Saviour. Can we bear to think of them? Oh, that our tears might flow at the very thought of our horrible conduct towards our Lord, whom we slew by our sins: and may we never, never, never indulge any one of all our iniquities, for no one of them is innocent of the murder of our best Beloved. They conspired to take away his life; let us execute them at once.

"Oh, how I hate those lusts of mine
That crucified my God;
Those sins that pierced and nail'd his flesh
Fast to the fatal wood!

"Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die;
My heart has so decreed:
Nor will I spare the guilty things
That made my Saviour bleed.

"Whilst with a melting, broken heart,
My murder'd Lord I view,
I'll raise revenge against my sins,
And slay the murderers too."

Remember, brethren, we cannot have Christ and have any one sin reigning in our hearts. We come to Christ as sinners, but when we receive Christ we hear him say, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Sin may look into our nature, as it does, with its tempting witcheries. Sin may ride through our nature, as it does, trampling down all that is good. Sin may lurk in our nature, as it does, ready to plot against the King of kings; but it cannot reign in our nature, for it has come under another sovereignty: Christ is on the throne. "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life" within our nature at this present time. It is not possible that we could set a single sin on any throne, even though it should be lower than Christ's throne; neither can we obey the lusts thereof. Our Lord Jesus will not share his dominion even with an angel, much less with a sin. If thou wilt have iniquity enthroned in thy heart thou must be lost. There is no hope for thee. Thou mayest have Christ and quit thy sin; but thou canst not have Christ and hug thy sin. Christ shall help thee to slay thy sin; but if thou sayest, "No, but I will indulge this evil," even though thou addest, "Is it not a little one?" thou wilt perish in thine iniquity. If there be one darling sin that thou wouldst spare, Christ and thy soul will never agree. There can be no peace between thee and Christ while there is peace between thee and sin, let that sin be what it may. I have known men give up drunkenness, and when they have signed the pledge they have thought, "Now I am somebody"; and they have gone on with some other habit which was quite as bad. I am glad enough to see you total abstainers; but that

will not save you. Drunkards cannot enter heaven; neither can liars, nor thieves, nor fornicators, nor unbelievers. You have driven out one Canaanite, but how about the rest? One man has said, "I cannot bear prodigality. The extravagant expenditure of that young profligate is abominable." Just so, but is not avarice abominable also? I do not suppose that you ever would spend too much money, for you are a mean old screw. You would never be tempted to waste your money, for you love it too well. Extravagance is not in your line; but you may as surely be ruined by covetousness and greed as by prodigality. Covetousness may be a better sort of vice for your pocket, but it will be nothing better for your soul when you have to stand before the judgment bar of God. One man loathes hypocrisy, but then he is cruel, hard, and unforgiving; another man will never swear, but he will lie as fast as a horse will gallop. I have known a man hate lying, and yet he has been given to lechery. I have known another who has been perfectly pure from fleshly sin, but then he has been as proud as Lucifer himself; and pride will destroy a man as much as any other form of sin. The fact is, the whole nest of unclean birds must be thrown to the ground. All the eggs of the cockatrice must be crushed. Let us pray—

> "The dearest idol I have known,
> Whate'er that idol be,
> Help me to tear it from its throne,
> And worship only thee."

Suppose that one of our missionaries were to come back from India, and say, "I have achieved a great marvel among the natives. All through one of the districts I went and preached, and wrought wonders. I found them worshipping gods made of the mud of the Ganges: I showed them the folly of it, and they broke their mud-gods to pieces. And some of them had wooden gods, and I induced them to burn them all. But there were some beautiful gods—gods of marble, and of gold, and of silver, and I had not the heart to meddle with them, for they were so artistic, so valuable, and so venerable. Why, one of them had eyes of diamond; and another had about his wrist a bracelet of rubies." Alas, Mr. Missionary! we see no reason for your self-congratulation. So you left the people worshipping those precious gods, did you? What good have you done? None whatever. It is evidently as evil an idolatry to worship a god of gold as it is to worship a god of mud. Now, if we come among you, and so deal with vice and improve the education and morals of the masses that we elevate the people, what have we done if we end there? We have taken away one set of sins, but have left others. We have broken the mud-gods, but if we leave the gold and silver gods, what good have we done, as before the sight of the Lord? Many men have been delivered from the bottom rank of lusts, and so far so good; but then the higher ranks of spiritual wickednesses in high places have been left untouched, and what has been the net result? Something for this world, but nothing for the next; something for morality, but nothing for spirituality. In the long run we shall not have done much even for morals, for the most loathsome of vices

flourish side by side with great apparent refinement. Even the King of Sodom was a perfect gentleman. Many an infamously unclean liver is a man honoured in society because of his cultured mind. Sins of all sorts must go, when grace takes possession of the soul. Bring out the golden calf! This costly idol must be ground to powder, and strewed upon the water. The golden calf is as detestable before the Lord as the most beggarly gods of wood. One form of enmity to God is as obnoxious to his law as another. Sin in satin is as great a rebel as sin in rags. You may wash sin in eau-de-Cologne, but it smells none the sweeter.

Remember, also, dear friends, that *a man cannot be free from sin if he is the servant of even one sin*. Here is a man who has a long chain on his leg—a chain of fifty links. Now, suppose that I come in as a liberator, and take away forty-nine links, but still leave the iron fastened to the pillar, and his leg in the one link which is within the iron ring, what benefit have I brought him? How much good have I done? The man is still a captive. If you had a bird here—say, a canary—and it was all free except one leg, it would not be a free bird then. "It is only held by a single bit of cotton," you say. Still the bird is not at liberty: it cannot fly as it pleases. As long as a man is held a captive by a single vice, no matter how small it is, he is still in bondage to iniquity. If any one sin binds him, masters him, he is not the Lord's free man. He is still a slave in the worst form of slavery: he is under the dominion of evil. Hence, you see, I spoke not too largely, when I said, "Down with them all!" They must all be conquered, every one. Not one single sin must be allowed to occupy the love of our heart and the throne of our nature.

There are certain sins that, when we begin to war with them, we very soon overcome. These Israelites, when they were up in the mountains, and in the woods, soon got at the hill-country Canaanites and destroyed them; but down in the plain, where there was plenty of room for horses and chariots, the Israelites were puzzled what to do; for some of these Canaanites had chariots of iron, which had scythes fixed to the axles, and when they drove into the ranks of an army, they mowed down the people as a reaping machine cuts down the standing corn. For a while this seems to have staggered the Israelites altogether; it was a terrible business to think about, and fear exaggerated the power of the dreadful chariots. Dread made them powerless, till they plucked up courage; and when they once plucked up courage, they found that these chariots were not nearly so terrible as they were supposed to be. There were ways of managing and mastering them, if Israel would but trust in God, and play the man. When a man is converted by divine grace, certain sins are readily overcome: they fly away at once, never to return. I hardly recollect, after talking with thousands of converts, hearing any brother say that he found it difficult to give up swearing. I have often heard people express their wonder that though they had never for years used a single sentence without an oath, yet, from the moment of their conversion, no profane word ever escaped their lips. I remember one who said, having been a profane swearer of the worst kind, that some years after his conversion, a hogshead rolled on his toe, and an ill word

escaped him for which he was nearly broken-hearted; but that during all his life beside, since his conversion, he never remembered that such a folly and sin had come near him. Swearing is a kind of Canaanite that is soon settled off—driven out and slain. So it is with many other forms of evil. We get our sword at their throats quickly, and by God's grace we are clean rid of all temptation to return to them. Such sins, though once powerful, are left dead on the field of battle. Glory be to God! Goliath's head is off, Sisera has the nail through his temple, Eglon is stabbed to the heart. The enemies of God and of our souls are dead. I know that some of you could bear testimony that your favoured sins became so disgusting to you that you have never had a temptation to wander in that direction; and if a desire towards them has crossed your mind, you have revolted against it, and cast it away from you with indignation.

But certain other sins are much tougher to deal with. They mean fight, and some of them seem to have as many lives as a cat. There is no killing them. When you think that you have slain them, they are up and at you again. They may be said to have chariots of iron. These sins are sometimes those which have gained their power—their chariots of iron—through *long habit*. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" No, he never shall, but the grace of God can work the change. The grace of God has taken all the spots out of many leopards, and all the black out of crowds of Ethiopians. But occasionally old, deep-seated habits come up again from their graves by a hideous resurrection. Did you never catch yourselves with a snatch of an old song coming to your memory, when you have been in prayer? When you have drawn very near to God, have you not been suddenly startled with the recollection of a filthy thing into which you once plunged? Terrible is the power of habit which has long held sway. It is not easy to uproot the oak of many a year's growth. These habits make chariots of iron, into which your sins mount, and they become terrible enemies to our holy desires and fervent resolves.

Some sins get their chariots of iron from being *congenial to our constitution*. Certain brethren and sisters are sadly quick-tempered; and as long as ever they live, they will have to be on their guard against growing suddenly angry, and speaking unadvisedly with their lips. They are quick and sensitive, and this might not in itself be a serious evil; but when sin wields that quickness and sensitiveness, evil comes of it. How many a sincere child of God has had to go for years groaning, as with broken bones, because of the quickness of his temper! As for these constitutional sins, you must not excuse them. I beseech you mark what I say about this; for many are ruined by supposing that their constitutional faults are hardly faults at all, but unavoidable accidents. You must not say of any sin, "I cannot help it." You have to help it. You must not say, "Oh, but it is natural to me." I know that it is natural—that is the very reason why you have to be doubly on your guard against it. Everything that is of nature—ay, and of your fallen nature when it is at its best—has to be put under the feet of Christ, that grace may reign over every form of evil.

Frequently the chariot of iron derives its force from the fact that a certain sin *comes rushing upon you on a sudden*, and so takes you at a disadvantage. If a man had notice of a temptation, he might be able to overcome it; but temptations never give us notice: can we expect them to do so? The sailor does not expect to have notice of every gale of wind that blows upon him. The soldier in battle does not reckon to have notice of every bullet that is coming his way. By what apparatus could we be kept aware of every advance of the evil one? The very essence of temptation often lies in the suddenness of it: we are carried off our feet or ever we are aware. Yet we must not say, because of this, "I cannot help it"; for we ought to be all the more watchful, and live all the nearer to God in prayer. We are bound to stand against a sudden temptation, as much as against a slower mode of attack. We must look to the Lord to be preserved from the arrow which flieth by day, and the pestilence which walketh in darkness. We are to cry to God for grace, that, let the gusts of temptation come how they may, and when they may, we may always be found in Christ, resting in him, covered with his divine power.

Dear friends, sometimes these sins get power from the fact that, if we do not yield to them, *we may incur ridicule on account of them.* Many a true believer who could burn at the stake cannot bear to be laughed at. Many persons are remarkably sensitive to a jest, or a sarcasm. They could bear to be flogged more easily than to be ridiculed. So the powers of darkness assail them with sneers, and jeers, and flouts, and gibes. These are to them as chariots of iron. I have no doubt that our soldier friends, who are about to be baptized to-night, will have a hard time of it in that respect. I pray God to strengthen them in the barrack-room, and make them like men in chain-armour, who cannot be wounded by sword or arrow. I would not, if I could, prevent any of you from being persecuted in your measure. Should not soldiers fight? I would stay the persecution for the sake of the persecutor; but for the sake of you who have to bear it, I would hardly lift a finger to screen you, because the trial is an education of the utmost value. We shall never see champions if there is no fighting. Brethren, some of us have lived in warfare so long, that we should be half afraid if we were long free from assault. We have been called pretty nearly every name now; and if there remain any other forms of abuse, we are waiting for their filthiness to be poured on our head. Yet our slanderers and revilers have not broken a single bone. They have not hurt our faith, nor blighted our hope, nor chilled our love, nor stopped our communion with God. Indeed, we are the better for the fire, the anvil, and the hammer with which our enemies have been good enough to work upon us. More closeness to God, more confidence in him, and more joy in him often come to the child of God when he is most under fire. Still the trial of cruel mockings makes sin seem to have chariots of iron.

Perhaps one of the things that is worst of all to a Christian is, that *certain sins are supposed to be irresistible.* It is a popular error, and a very pernicious one. "These chariots of iron," the Israelites said, "it is of no use to try to contend with them." So they gave up the plains to the Canaanites. It is a sad calamity when a Christian person says,

"I can keep straight in everything except *that*. Do not touch me there. You must allow me a great deal of latitude in that direction. Please make large allowances for my peculiar constitution." All such pleading is mischievous. Listen to me, my sister. *I* will make allowances for you; but I beseech you, do not make any allowance for yourself. My brother, I implore you, do not take out a license to sin. If I make a kind excuse for you in sympathy with your weakness, being a man like yourself, it is one thing; but for you to make an allowance for yourself will be most injurious to your soul. You have to overcome and destroy the sin for which you claim toleration. Mark that! You must not—you dare not—allow any sin to master you; and if you know that it does overpower you, do not therefore claim that you may indulge it, but draw an inference of the opposite sort: because it has mastered you, concentrate your entire strength upon its utter destruction. Sin must come down: let not your eye spare it. The Canaanite must be driven out: the finest and fairest of the race must fall by the sword. We cannot enter heaven with a single sin remaining in us, for "they are without fault before the throne of God." Ere we can pass the pearly portal every spot and wrinkle must be removed from us. See your calling, brethren. Look at it well. Do you not need heavenly strength? Will you not seek for the Holy Spirit?

II. I now turn to the second head. I have said that we must drive them out. The second head is that THEY CAN BE DRIVEN OUT. I do not say that we can drive them out, but I say that they can be driven out. It will be a great miracle, but let us believe in it; for other great wonders have been wrought. Note first that *you and I have been raised from the dead.* Is it not so? "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." If a dead man has been raised, then anything can be done with the man who is now made alive. Do not tell me that there is a spot on the face of newly-risen Lazarus that cannot be washed away: I do not believe it. Do not tell me that there is a bent finger that cannot be straightened: after having seen the dead man live I am certain that the living man can be perfected. He that could raise Lazarus from the dead, can cause his grave-clothes to be unbound, can raise him beyond his imperfections and infirmities, can make him perfect in every good work to do his will. It can be done. The raising from the dead is the evidence that it can be done.

You have also by divine power been led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as the result of divine grace within your heart, what is there that you cannot do? Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is a very simple thing, say you. I know it is, but still it is the greatest thing a man ever does. "What shall we do," said they to Jesus, "that we might work the works of God?" And he said, "This is the work of God"—this is a God-like work, the highest kind of work that ever can be done —"that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." If you have been enabled to believe, you can be enabled to be holy. He that led you to exert faith, can lead you, by faith, to overcome any and every iniquity.

In the next place, *you have already conquered many sins.* Look at the heaps of Canaanites that you have killed. Begin at the beginning,

where God began with you in the work of grace in your soul: is there not a wonderful difference between what you were then and what you are now? Were there not sins entrenched in your nature, like the Canaanites in their walled cities? But Jericho fell flat to the ground. Hosts upon hosts of unbeliefs and iniquities dwelt within your daily life, but you have driven them out. By God's grace you have resisted temptation, and escaped from lusts, and risen above doubts. You have hitherto overcome through the blood of the Lamb. You can say, "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." He that has helped you so far can surely help you even to the conclusion of the fight. Do not doubt that the almighty power of divine grace, which has achieved so much, can achieve yet more. Be strong and very courageous, for the Lord of hosts himself is at your side.

Have you not seen other Christians conquer? Oh, let your memory charge you now with brethren and sisters in whom you saw great infirmities and sins at the commencement of their spiritual career; but how they have grown! How they have vanquished inbred sin! The tears come into my eyes when I think of certain members of this church—some in heaven, and some still among us. I remember what they used to be, and what they are now, and I can hardly believe that they are the same persons. Fierce temper has been tamed, strong passions have been bound, black melancholy has been chased away. When they first joined the church, they were good, useful, sound men, but the pear was very hard; I should not have liked to put my teeth into it: they were stern, self-willed, and obstinate. The fruit was not only hard, but sour, for with all their zeal they were tart, sharp, and the reverse of gentle. But now, how mellow they are! What a sweet smell of ripeness there is about them! How ready they are to be taken to the great feast above! What God has done for them he can do for you. He can get that hardness out of you. That greenness, that sourness—he can graciously remove. Every man among us has to wear out at least one pair of green slippers; and when he has worn them out, then he puts on something better by way of travelling gear, and has his feet "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." We generally begin with a fool's boots at first, but God, who makes the foolish wise, makes men of us at length. He who trains the babes, till out of their mouths he brings forth mighty witness to his Word, can do the same with us.

Beloved, we have been talking about what can be done and what cannot be done. Have we thought about it? We are dealing with the Almighty; and with him all things are possible. I think I see the battle now going on, the enemy seems to prevail, and the timid hearts of the soldiers of the cross sink within them. Listen! You have not yet drawn upon your reserves. Do you not know that within call there is eternal power and Godhead, waiting to help you in your struggle against all evil. Call up your reserves! Intreat your great ally to send reinforcements in this hour of need. Beseech the Lord to give you more grace; and as you have received life at his hands, pray that you may receive it yet more abundantly.

Does any man know how holy he can be? "It doth not yet appear

what we shall be." God give us grace to pray, and watch, and believe, and expect, and may the prayer of my dear brother Williams be fully answered, for he just now prayed that "the weakest among us may be as David, and David as the angel of God."

God help us to feel that the Canaanites can be driven out.

III. And then we close with our third head, and that is, THEY SHALL BE DRIVEN OUT. They must be driven out; they can be driven out; they shall be driven out.

They shall be driven out. That is a speech for a monarch. "Must" is for the king, and "shall" is for the King of kings. Well, well, we venture to say it, because we only give the echo of his sovereign tones. *This is what Christ died for.* He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. Christ died to save his people, not from some of their sins, but from all their sins. His precious blood cleanseth from all sin. His perfect atonement secures perfection to his saints. The death of sin is guaranteed by the death of Christ. Let us pray to-night fervently—

> "Let the water and the blood,
> From thy riven side which flowed,
> Be of sin the double cure,
> Cleanse us from its guilt and power."

Brethren, *this is what Christ lives for.* Up in heaven he pleads for us, and "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The desire of his heart is that we may be kept from sin. "Holy Father, keep them through thy Word." He pleads that, though Satan may desire to have them and sift them as wheat, they still may be preserved. Christ in heaven is the pattern of what we shall be, and he will not fail to mould us after his own model. We shall one day be perfectly conformed to his image, and then we shall be with him in glory. Our Lord's honour is bound up with the presentation of all his saints in spotless purity to himself in the day of his glorious marriage.

This is what the Holy Spirit is given for. He is not given to come into our hearts, and comfort us *in* our sins, but to deliver us from all evil, and to comfort us in Christ Jesus. He quickens, he directs, he helps, he illuminates; he does a thousand things; but, chiefly, he sanctifies us. He comes into the heart to drive out every other power that seeks to have dominion there. By the living Spirit of God, who dwells in you, as God within his temple, I charge you cry to him that every Dagon may be broken, every altar of Baal cast down, every golden calf ground to powder.

O brothers and sisters, let us never from this time forth write out a pass for any sin to come and go in our hearts. We will have no licensed sin; no place in which evil may claim a lodging. We will not have a spare bed for iniquity, nor give it house-room, even in the barn or the out-house. Do not let us idly say, "I cannot get over that sinful habit." You can get over it: you must get over it. Do

not say, "I will draw the line *there*. I really must tolerate that one particular fault." Do not tolerate it! It will ruin you. How dare you say, "I must drink so much poison"? Touch it not. Oh, that the poison of iniquity may never come near your lips, however sweet it may seem to the carnal taste!

This is the very object of the gospel which we preach to you; and we have preached in vain unless you are striving against sin. Ours is a holy gospel, and if it does not make you holy, it has done nothing for you. This, especially, is the meaning of the ordinance of baptism for which the pool is now open before you. It is one of the meanings of believer's baptism that you are henceforth buried with Christ—dead to your old sins, and risen with Christ in newness of life. What a farce it is if you are still living in sin! I shall thank God that I baptized none of you, if I see you still alive unto sin as you used to be. If you and I are unholy, we stab religion in its vital parts, and murder our profession. When we make up our minds that we will allow any sin within us, we do to that extent deny to Christ the travail of his soul. Nothing grieves the Spirit of God like unholiness; and nothing pleases Christ like seeing his disciples walking in his footsteps.

I wish that I were able to speak more instructively upon such a subject as this; but I speak to myself, and I feel the effect of the truth as I utter it. I pray that I may speak to all here present with practical result. I doubt not that I address many dear brethren who are far in advance of myself, and to them I say, "Go on, dear friends, from strength to strength; and may the Lord help you to tread all the powers of darkness down, and win the day speedily." But I speak to others that are far behind me; and I am sorry that they are so, for I am very far from having attained, although I press forward with all my heart. If you be living children of the living God, lay hold upon that promise, "By little and by little, I will surely drive them out." If you cannot conquer all the Hivites and Jebusites to-day, at least down with one, and then with another. May the mighty grace of God, without which you can do nothing, help you to keep your sword out of its sheath, driving at the very heart of sin with your utmost strength, until the last sin shall lie dead at the feet of Christ, and you shall be perfectly happy because he has made you perfectly holy. There is no fear of your stopping here upon this sin-defiled earth if you have once reached the point of perfectness. This is a poor world for the completely sanctified. God does not leave his ripe wheat out in the fields too long: he takes the sheaves home to his barn when they are quite ready. We shall soon be with him where he is when we are made like him. The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians vi. 10—24.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—672, 674, 673.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A PARADOX.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 4TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On a Thursday Evening in the Year 1886.

"When I am weak, then am I strong."—2 Corinthians xii. 10.

THE expression is paradoxical, and seems somewhat singular; yet it was the experience of the apostle Paul, a man of calm spirit, by no means fanciful, a wise man, and far removed from a fanatic. It was the experience of one who was led of the Spirit of God, and therefore it was a gracious experience: the experience of one who was a father in Israel, who could safely bid us be imitators of him, even as he imitated the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore it was a safe experience. If we are weak, so was Paul; and if, like him, we are strong in our weakness, we shall be in the best of company. If the same things be seen in us which were wrought in the apostle of the Gentiles, we may join with him in glorying in infirmities, because the power of Christ doth rest upon us, and we may count ourselves happy that with such a saint we can cry, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

I. Perhaps I can expound the text best if I first TURN IT THE OTHER WAY UP, and use it as a warning.

When I am strong, then am I weak. Perhaps, while thinking of the text thus turned inside out, we shall be getting light upon it to be used when we view it with the right side outwards, and see that *when we are weak, then we are strong.*

I am quite sure that some people think themselves very strong, and are not so. Their proud consciousness of fancied strength is the indication of a terrible weakness. We have among us *certain persons who think that they can do all that is needful for their own salvation* whenever they please to do so. They can perform all sorts of good works, or at least quite enough to carry them to heaven. Their first idea is that they are to be saved by their own doings; and they really expect to be so saved. They may admit that they have a few faults and flaws in their character; but these are so trifling as to be hardly worth

mentioning, and God Almighty is too merciful to be very particular. Their lives have been excellent, their tempers amiable, their manners courteous, their spirit generous, and they quite believe that by keeping on at the same pace they will win the prize: if they do not, who will? The ship of their character is in fine condition; they have no leaks which the pumps cannot keep down; their sails are not rent, and they hope to sail into the haven of peace with a glorious cargo of merit, having an abundant entrance, and hearing a loud "Well done!" Ah, my friend! that consciousness of legal strength is a mere delusion, and it will have to be taken out of you. There is no going to heaven that way—by self and the works of self. Your error is a common one, but it is fatal. I have seen many epitaphs of persons, placed by the mistaken kindness of friends upon their tombstones, which I felt sure would have been sufficient to shut them out of heaven if they had been true. These departed worthies do not appear to have been sinners at all: their virtues were superlative, their faults non-existent. Such wonderful people would appear, from their epitaphs, to have flown up to the gates of heaven upon the wings of their own virtues, and to have entered there without a passport of mercy, as burgesses by their own right of the New Jerusalem. I wonder how they would behave themselves in heaven, if they were really admitted there! All the rest are singing, "We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"; but these needed no washing, and so they would be likely to strike up a little song by themselves, and sing, "Our robes never needed washing; we kept them white as snow." What a discord that would create in the music of the skies! What a division of character and feeling would be found among celestials! I cannot see how there could be any harmony of sentiment amongst sinners saved by grace, and righteous ones who owed nothing to mercy, nothing to the atoning sacrifice.

No, my strong and virtuous hearer, you are under a grave delusion. There is a great similarity between your talk and the talk of that religious individual who went up to the temple in our Saviour's days, and, standing before the thrice-holy God, dared to say, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are." He was not justified that day, nor will you be. A poor tax-gatherer, despised by himself, and an off-cast from his own people, stood in the temple at the same time, and all that he dared to say was, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This unworthy sinner went to his house justified, while the other worthy person was not accepted. If you think yourselves strong enough to procure heaven by your own efforts, you are ignorantly insulting the cross of Christ, for you seem to insinuate that your virtues can avail you without Jesus. If you really mean this, there is more venom of rebellion against God in your self-righteousness than in the outward vice of those who make no pretence to godliness. For you to put your works in the place of Jesus is a blasphemy against the Saviour's blood and righteousness. Why needed Christ to die if men could save themselves? Why need he bleed upon the cross if your merits will suffice to gain you a place among the blessed? There is a fatal weakness in the claim of that man who thinks himself strong enough to force his own passage to the throne of God; that weakness

lies in the pride which insults the Crucified, the disloyalty which prefers itself to the royal Saviour.

> "Perish the virtue, as it ought—abhorred,
> And the fool with it who insults his Lord."

Listen to me a moment, and quit your fancied strength: you, my hearer, cannot keep the law of God, for you have already broken it. How can you preserve a crystal vase entire when you have already dashed it to atoms? You must now be saved by the merits and the strength of another, or not at all; for your own merit is out of the question, through past failure. That strength of yours, upon which you dote so much, is perfect weakness. May the Lord show you this, and make you faint at heart on that account; for then you shall be strong, with real and saving strength! Now your imaginary strength is making you really weak, and that boasted merit of yours is shutting you out from true righteousness. He that is strong in the notion of merit is weak even to utter folly before the God of truth.

"Yes," we hear you reply, "there is a gospel way of salvation. We know that there is, for you preach it continually. You tell us that men must repent, and believe the gospel; that they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and must both overcome sin, and follow after holiness." Yes, I do say all that; but what do you say to it? Is it really so that you find here a ground for your own strength? Do you say, "*I feel that I can repent whenever I please, and believe in Jesus when I choose*"? Ah! then I must assure you that when you are strong in that way, you are weak. I never yet knew anybody repent who gloried in his power to repent; I never yet knew a man heart-broken for sin who boasted that he could break his own heart when and where he pleased. "What!" cries one, "surely I can believe in Jesus Christ when I please!" I have not denied that statement, have I? But I tell you that your notion of power to believe is your weakness; and I would rather by half hear you cry, with deep solemnity, "Oh, that God would give me faith! Lord, help my unbelief!" Your sense of inability to believe in Christ would be a far better token for good, in my judgment, than your present flippant talk about believing when you like. Men who are in earnest talk not so: whatever their strength may be, they find it little enough in the hour of need. I beg to assure you that I have never known a man believe in Jesus who trusted that he could so believe; for his trust in his own believing kept him from trusting to Jesus; but I have known many a poor, struggling soul lie at the cross-foot, and say, "Lord, help me to look to Jesus, and live"; and God has helped him to give that look in which there is eternal life. While he has been praying, his prayer, yes, his weeping prayer, has had in it that very look to Jesus for which he was pleading. His sense of inability to believe has made him look to Jesus for believing, and he has found it in him.

You say that you can turn your heart towards God whenever you please. I am not going into any dispute with you about your assertion, nor the doctrine, which is supposed to support you in your profession of strength; but I will say this, that your idea of having personal strength, with which to purify and renew your own heart—your idea

that you can create in yourself a right spirit—your idea that you can raise yourself from your death in sin—is to me a prophecy of much evil for yourself. Where self is conspicuous, I see an omen of mischief, I see no good in this fine opinion of yourself; but if I heard you cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God"—if I heard you say, "Lord, quicken me out of my death in sin"—if I saw you lying down before the Most High, and praying, "Turn me, and I shall be turned"—I should have a far brighter hope of you. In your weakness you would become strong; but in your present strength, I am sure I see a great weakness, which is likely to be your ruin. O dear hearts, your best friend does not lie within your own doors. Your hope for better things shines yonder at the right hand of God, where the living Saviour has all power given to him in heaven and in earth. Sinner, if you grow no sweeter flowers than the dunghill of your own nature can nourish, you will die amid poisonous weeds. If you never drink of better water than the filthy well of your own heart will yield, you will perish of thirst, or of a deadly draught. Another, and a better helper than one born in your house, must come this way. Help must be laid upon one that is mighty, exalted of the Lord out of the people, and endowed with divine power and Godhead, for only such a Saviour, infinitely good and great, can save a soul so lost as yours. When you get down, down, down, into utter weakness, then you will be strong, because then you will rest upon the Lord's salvation; but as you are strong in your thoughts of yourself, you are kept from Jesus, and are weakness itself.

So far I have spoken by way of warning to unconverted people.

I desire now to say a word to those who profess to be Christians, and, let us hope, are so; but they are, in a measure, erring in the same way as those to whom I have spoken. They are remarkably strong: at least, in their own esteem they are very Samsons, although others fear that the Philistines will capture them. By this token may they know their own weakness—even by this, that they think themselves strong.

First, *many are wonderfully strong as to knowledge.* They know almost everything. If in any department they are a little short, they make up for it by knowing so much more in another direction. If they are too narrow here, they overlap there. They are knowing men, and need no man to tell them so. They are instructed in the faith from pole to pole: they know both that which is afar off, and that which is nigh. An argument is a pleasure to them. They go into company where the eternal verities are denied, and feel a delight in taking sides. They will sit where the vital simplicities of God's word are set up like marks for boys to throw at; and they like the amusement, for it exercises their knowing faculty, and gives them a chance of showing their mental power. They are not children, but quite able to think for themselves. They are not credulous, but amazingly clear-headed and cultured. I have noticed that these fine gentlemen have been the first to deny the faith, and to fall into all manner of heresies. Do you wonder? Those who are so very sure are always the most uncertain. I could instance some that had such confidence in themselves that they would have argued with the very fiend of hell on any

question, for they felt that not even Satanic craft could conquer them; but at this present moment the prince of darkness holds them in his power. They hold no controversy with the devil now, for they are very largely agreed with him in assailing the gospel of God's grace. They have gone entirely over to the denial of everything that is gracious and holy and scriptural, and the main cause of their apostasy is their own invincible self-confidence. They were so strong that they became weaker than others. O brethren, when we are very wise in our own esteem, we are bordering upon fools, even if we have not already entered into that company. When we tremblingly sit at Jesus' feet, to learn everything fresh, and fresh from him; when we shudder at anything that questions his Deity, or lowers his sacrifice; when we shut up a book and cast it from us, because we feel that it pollutes us with unbelief—then are we wise and strong. When the Word of the Lord is enough, then are we in the way of wisdom and strength. The man of one book is proverbially a terrible man; but the man of ten thousand books, who can baffle all adversaries and foil all foes, shall soon lie wounded on the plain, if he be not slain outright. Let us take heed unto ourselves, that we fall not through being headstrong, or strong in the head, which is much the same thing.

Again, I have noticed some professedly Christian people *wonderfully strong through experience.* Their experience has been very extensive, and the knowledge it has brought them they consider to be specially profound, and, consequently, they are not afraid of temptation, for they feel that they are too wise to be entrapped. They are so experienced now, that things which young people ought not to think of, they can do with impunity—so they foolishly dream. They can go just so far, and then stop, for they are fitted with the patent brakes of prudence. They are such good mountain climbers that they can stand on the edge of a precipice, and look over, and even hang over, without fear of their ever being giddy, and falling over. Of course they would not advise other people to go quite so far as they may safely go; but then, what is temptation to other men is no temptation to them. Their vessel is so tight and trim, and they understand navigation so perfectly, that they rather like a tempest than not, just to show how well their vessel can behave in a storm. Ah me! When you next read the list of wrecks, you may expect to see the name of their ship among the castaways. Old birds may not be caught with chaff, but they can be shot with a gun. No one is out of danger, and no one is more in danger than the man who is carnally secure. Those who feel that their experience, be it what it may, only teaches them that the farther they can keep from temptation the better, these are in a better state. When experience drives us to pray with emphasis the prayer "Lead us not into temptation," then it is working aright. In the idea of strength and wisdom lurks an awfully perilous weakness; but in a sense of personal weakness dwells a real strength. If you are extremely jealous, conscientious, and watchful, many will tell you how weak you are; but you are, in reality, a strong man, because of your fear to encounter evil influences: in that fear lies one essential element of holy strength. While he that rather braves temptation, because he feels so strong, shall find, it may be to his everlasting sorrow, how

great his weakness is; he that shuns the appearance of evil, because of conscious weakness, shall find therein his security and strength. Oh, let none of us, because we are getting grey, suppose that we are invulnerable to sin! Let us not dream that because we have been church-members so many years, or even because we have sustained a long and useful ministry, we are therefore beyond gun-shot of the enemy, or without necessity to seek daily strength for daily duty. My brethren, we cannot perform the smallest duty aright apart from the help of God; neither can we be secure against even the grossest sin, apart from the perpetual guard of him that keepeth Israel. If we, in our self-conceit, write ourselves down among the mightiest, and forget our entire dependence upon heavenly grace, we may be left to prove, by unhappy experience, that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Let us note another point. I have known certain Christian people who thought themselves *singularly strong in the matter of wisdom and prudence*. They have been gifted with clear insight and a measure of shrewdness, and have, therefore, felt that their judgment on most subjects was that of an umpire. Have you ever noticed that the raw material of a very grossly foolish person is a cautious individual? The cunning are the readiest dupes when craft is busy in taking its prey. So, too, a wise man is needed if there is to be exhibited the worst form of folly. If we were called upon to select a man who, as to his life as a whole, perpetrated the greatest folly, we should mention Solomon. Yet he was the wisest of men. Yes, the cream of wisdom, when curdled, makes the worst of folly. Was ever man so insanely enthusiastic in vain pursuits as this master of all knowledge? Then, brethren, whenever we feel sure of our own superior intelligence, let us suspect ourselves of weakness. Let the same fear come upon us when we feel sure about our way, so sure that we think we need not pray about it, or in any manner wait for divine direction. Beware of those matters in which you think you cannot err. Men who have been wise in great difficulties have blundered fearfully where all was simple. The Israelites thought that the men who came to them begging for a league of brotherhood could not deceive them. It must be safe to be on good terms with these interesting strangers. Why, look, their shoes are well-nigh worn from their feet, and patched and clouted to the last degree! Their clothes, which, we doubt not, were new when they left their distant homes, are now threadbare, and their biscuit, which they took fresh from the oven, is stale with age. It is evident, upon the face of it, that they must have come from a very remote part of the world, and therefore a treaty with them will not interfere with the divine command. There can be no need to pray about a case so clear. Thus the Gibeonites overreached them, as we also shall be overreached when we are so exceedingly sure of our course. Brethren, let us not be so wise as to dispense with our heavenly Counsellor and Guide. Would not that be the height of madness? It is a salutary thing to feel that your case requires you to trust the helm of your ship with the divine Pilot. It is even a blessed thing to feel that you are shut up to faith, and must by absolute trust in God throw the responsibility of your action upon him. I will give you an

instance. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is placed in a peculiar position. God has commanded him to take his son Isaac, and offer him for a sacrifice. Here is a terrible puzzle. Here was enough to stagger any human mind. Surely it could not be right for a father to slay his son! How could it be wise to kill the son in whom all the promises of God were vested? The more you think of the case from a father's standpoint, the more it will perplex you. Abraham could not make anything out of it by his judgment, but he met it all by faith. All that he could say to Isaac was, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." He was thus saying to himself, "The Lord will get me out of this difficulty." He had no wisdom with which to conjecture how the affair would end: he had to cease from guessing, and just trust in his God. Abraham made no mistake in this. Oh that we could do the same! Observe that same Abraham when he goes down to Egypt. His wife is exceedingly beautiful, and he fears that the king of Egypt will kill him in order to obtain his wife; what will he do? I can see a great many ways in which he might have warded off that evil. He was not called upon to go to Egypt at all, if he thereby risked his wife's honour; or, if he must go, he should have gone boldly, acknowledging his wife, and trusting both her and himself with the Lord. Instead of that, the patriarch begins by inducing Sarah to join with him in equivocation. "Say thou art my sister." She was in some sense his sister; but it was using a word in a double sense for a deceitful purpose, and it was a pitiful thing for Abraham to do. Nor was it a prudent scheme after all: in fact, it was the cause of the very trouble which it sought to prevent. Sarah would not have been taken away from Abraham at all if Pharaoh had known that she was his wife; so that the wise was snared by his own craftiness. The Lord graciously delivered him, but in that very act left a root of bitterness behind to be his future plague. Pharaoh gave to him women-servants, and I doubt not among the rest was Hagar, who became the object of sin, and the source of sorrow to the household. In the fancied strength of Abraham, by which he emulated the craft of other Orientals, he displayed his weakness; but in the other case, where no wit or wisdom could assist him, he cast himself upon the Lord, and in his weakness he behaved like the grand man that he really was. Brothers, let us confess ourselves fools, that we may be wise; for otherwise we shall fall into that other condition, of professing ourselves wise, and becoming fools. Let us ignore our wisdom, even if we have any. God alone is wise: he that trusteth either his own heart or head is a fool. Lean not to thine own understanding, but lean wholly upon the Lord; so shalt thou be established.

Further, dear friends, *we shall often find that our strength will lie in patience*—in extreme weakness which yields itself up to the will of God without the power or will to murmur. We sang in our hymn just now—

> "And when it seems no chance nor change
> From grief can set me free,
> Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
> And, patient, waits on thee."

I am sure that in reference to power, either to do or to suffer rightly,

we are not strong when we compliment ourselves upon our ability; and we are strong when, under a sense of absolute inability, we depend wholly upon God. That sermon preached in the glory of our oratory turned out to be mere husks for swine; while that discourse which we delivered in weakness, with a humble hope that God would use it, proved to be royal meat for the Lord's chosen. That work which you performed in the vigour of your unquestioned talent came to nothing, while that quiet act which you washed with your tears, and perfumed with your prayers, will live, and yield you sheaves. Creature strength brings forth nothing which has life in it: only the seed which the Creator puts into the hand of our weakness will produce a harvest. It is well to be nothing: it is better still to be "less than nothing." We ought to dread a sense of capacity, for it will render us incapable; but a sense of utter incapacity apart from God is a fit preparation for being used by the Lord. "Unto them that have no might he increaseth strength."

So it is in bearing as well as acting. If we say concerning sickness, "I shall never be impatient. I can bear it like a Stoic." What of that? You will then have done no more than many have done before you with no great gain to themselves or to others. But if, bowing your head before the Lord, you wait his sovereign will, and say, "Lord, help me. If thy left hand shall smite me, let thy right hand sustain me. I am willing to drink this bitter cup, saying, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.' Lord, help me!"—you shall bear up triumphantly, and come out of the furnace refined, to the praise and the glory of your God. When you fancy that you are strong to suffer, you will fail; but in conscious weakness you will be enabled to play the man.

I have now done with the text, as I have turned it upside down. May God bless it to any here who feel high and mighty, by causing it to put them in their proper place.

II. Now, let us take our text THE RIGHT WAY UPWARDS. "When I am weak, then am I strong." "When" and "then" are the two pivots of the text—the hinges upon which it turns.

"*When* I am weak." What does that mean? It means when the believer is *consciously weak*, when he painfully feels, and distinctly recognizes that he is weak, then he is strong. In truth, we are always weak, whether we know it or not; but when we not only believe this to be the fact, but see it to be the fact—then it is that we are strong. When it is forced home upon us, that we are less than nothing and vanity—when our very soul echoes and re-echoes that word, "Without me ye can do nothing"—then it is that we are strong.

When he is *growingly weak*. Yes, for he sees his own weakness more and more clearly as he advances: as he grows stronger in faith he is much more conscious of the weakness of the flesh. I talked about my weakness from this platform five-and-twenty years ago; but I stand here and tremble under it now to a far greater degree than I did in my younger and more vigorous time. I knew it three-and-thirty years ago, when I first spoke to you, but I did not know it as I know it now. I was then weak, and I owned it: but I am now weak, and groan about it almost involuntarily. Yes, and I sometimes sing because of my weakness, learning to glory in my infirmities

because the power of Christ doth rest upon me. When we are growingly weak, when we become weaker and weaker, when we seem to faint into a deeper swoon than ever as to our own strength, till death is written upon every power that we once thought we had, and we feel that we can do absolutely nothing apart from the Holy Spirit, then we are strong indeed.

We are strong, too, when we feel *painfully weak*. It is well when we mourn because we are so weak, and cry out to ourselves, "My weakness, my weakness, woe unto me! When I would do good, evil is present with me. When I would rise to heaven, the body of this death detains me. I would do great things for God, but I have no might. Alas for my weakness!" At such a time we are really rising, and are bringing most glory to God. These are growing pains —agonies such as none know but the truly and growingly spiritual. A painful weakness is strength. It may seem a paradox, but it is true.

We are strong when we are *contritely weak*. When we confess that much of our weakness is our fault—a weakness which we ought to have overcome—even then we have in that weakness a real strength. The sort of weakness that makes a man say, "I cannot be any stronger, I am doing my best," is not strength, but folly; but that weakness which makes you lament your failures and deplore your shortcomings, has in it a holy stimulus and force. That weakness which makes you dissatisfied with all you are and all you do, is goading you on to better and stronger things. If you feel that even when most earnest you have not prayed as you could wish, there is evidently strength in your desires, and your desires are prayers. If after any service you pour forth showers of penitential tears because the service was imperfect, there is evidently a strong soul of obedience within you. When you can neither repent, nor believe, nor love as you wish to do, you are repenting, believing, and loving with a strength which is more true than apparent. It is the will with which we act which is the strength of the action; and when the will is so powerful that it makes us mourn because we cannot find how to perform its bidding, then are we strong according to the divine measurement of strength. Contrite weakness is spiritual strength.

When a man is *thoroughly weak*—not only partially, but altogether weak—then is he strong. When apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, he is utter weakness, and nothing more—then it is that he is strong. Let me persuade you to make a full confession of weakness to the Lord. Say, "Lord, I cannot do what I ought to do: I cannot do what I want to do: I cannot do what I used to do: I cannot do what other people do: I cannot do what I mean to do: I cannot do what I am sure I shall do: I cannot do what I feel impelled to do; and over this sinful weakness I mourn." Then add, "Lord, I long to serve thee perfectly, yet I cannot do it. Unless thou help me I can do nothing aright. There will be no good in my actions, my words, my feelings, or my desires, unless thou continue to fill me with thine own holy energy. Lord, help me! Lord, help me!" Brother, you are strong while you plead in that fashion. You can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth you; and he will strengthen

you, now that you are emptied of self. How true it is, "When I am weak, then am I strong"!

I have brought out the "when." Now lend me your ears and hearts just for a minute, while I bring out the "then." "*Then* am I strong." When is that?

Why, a man is strong when he is consciously weak, because now he has reached the truth. He really is weak; and if he does not know that he is so, he is under the influence of a falsehood. Now, a lie is a thing of weakness. Lying strength is all fluff and foam: a mere appearance, a mockery, a delusion. Nothing hinders from getting the reality like contentment with a mere appearance. The true heart is heartily sick of shows and shams, and it cries, "Lord, help me to get rid of these shadows! Help me to come at the truth! Help me to deal with realities!" When you are made to feel your utter weakness you are on sure ground of truth—unpleasant truth, no doubt, yet sure truth. You are now on safe ground touching fundamentals, and making sure work. What you now do will be soundly done. All the while that we keep building on a sandy made-up foundation, we are piling up that which will, in all probability, come down even faster than we put it up. While the rotten rubbish remains on the spot, you cannot do anything worth doing; but if that accumulation can be carted away, there will seem to be a great hole, but you will get down to the real bottom, and get a foundation; and then what you build will be worth putting up, because it will stand. Therefore, a man becomes strong when he is consciously weak, because he is on the truth, and is not being flattered by false hopes.

Next, he will be strong because *he will only go with a commission to support him.* He will not be eager to run without being sent. He says within himself, when he proposes a service to himself, "No, I am too weak to undertake anything of my own head." He will wait for a call. This is not the kind of man that will climb up into a pulpit, and from a dizzy brain pour out nonsense. He will not crave to lead, for he feels that he needs much help even to follow. He feels himself too weak to set up for a master in Israel. This is not the kind of man that will venture into argument with sceptics for the fun, or for the glory, of the thing. Oh, no; he is too weak for that. He says, "If I am called to defend the faith, I will do it in God's strength, hoping that it will be given me in the same hour what I shall speak. If I am called to preach I will preach, and nobody shall stop me; for the Lord will be with my mouth. But, you see, until the man is conscious of his own weakness, he will run without being sent; and there is nobody so weak as that man. No one so weak as the man who has no commission from God, and no promise of help from him. Such a man will be thinking of this, and thinking of that, and running for this, that, and the other, because he has a lot of waste energy which he wants to use somewhere or somehow. Could we once see him consciously weak we should hear him say, "Here am I, send me!" in answer to the question, "Whom shall I send?" Then he would not go a warfare at his own charges, but he would draw upon the all-sufficiency of God, and find himself equal to every emergency.

The man who is consciously weak is strong, next, because of *the*

holy caution that he will be sure to use. He will be on his guard, because he does not feel able to cope with adversaries. He will ask for a convoy for his little barque, for he is aware of pirates. If this weak man has to pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, depend upon it he will carry in his hand the weapon of All-prayer, like a drawn sword. The man that has strength goes hurrying on over hedge and ditch, and soon comes into mischief; but the consciously weak pilgrim keeps to the high-road, and travels carefully; and hence he is strong. Fear is a notably good housekeeper: she may not keep a luxurious table, but she always locks the doors at night, and takes care of all under her charge. Holy caution begets prudence; and prudence, by fostering vigour, and crying for heavenly aid, becomes strength.

Moreover, when a man is weak, then is he strong, because *he is sure to pray*, and prayer is power. The man who laments his weakness is sure to cry to the strong for strength. The more his weakness presses on him, the more will he pray. While he can do without his God he will do without his God; but when his own weakness becomes utter and entire, and he is ready to perish, then he turns unto his Lord, and is made strong. The utterly weak cry out unto God as nobody else does. He is too weak to play at praying: he groans, he sighs, he weeps. In his abject weakness he prevails, as Jacob did. He wrestled all night; but now at last the angel has touched the hollow of his thigh, and made his sinew shrink, and he cannot wrestle any longer. What will he do now? He falls; and as he falls he grasps his antagonist, and holds him fast, crying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." As much as to say, "I cannot wrestle with thee, I cannot try another fall; but I can and will hold thee fast. The dead weight of my weakness makes me hold thee as an anchor holds a ship. I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." The weaker a man is in himself the stronger he is in prayer, if he makes use of his weakness as an appealing argument—"Lord, if I were strong, thou mightest leave me. Do not leave me, for I am weakness itself. I am the feeblest child in all thy family, leave me not, neither forsake me. If thou leavest any, leave not thy poor dying infant, that can hardly wail out its griefs." Weakness, as a plea with God in prayer, becomes a source of strength.

When we are weak we are strong, again, because then *we are driven away from self to God.* All strength is in God, and it is well to come to the one solitary storehouse and source of might. There is no power apart from God. As long as you and I look to the creature, we are looking to a cracked, broken cistern, that holds no water; but when we know that it is broken, and that there is not a drop of water in it, then we hasten to the great fountain and well-head. While we rest in any measure upon self, or the creature, we are standing with one foot on the sand; but when we get right away from human nature because we are too weak to have the least reliance upon self whatever, then we have both feet on the rock, and this is safe standing. If thou believest in the living God, and if all thine own existence is by believing, thou livest at a mighty rate. But if thou believest in God in a measure, and if, at the same time, thou trustest thyself in a measure, thou art living at a dying rate, and half the joy which is possible to

thee is lost. Thou art taking in bread with one hand, and poison with the other: thou art feeding thy soul with substance and with shadow, and that makes a sorry mixture. When the shadow is clean taken away, and thou hast nothing but the substance, then art thou a strong man, fed upon substantial meat.

Last of all, dear friends, I believe that, when a man is weak, he becomes strong to a large extent, because *his weakness compels him to concentrate all his faculties.* A sense of weakness brings out all the forces of a resolute spirit, and leads him to call in all the energy within his reach. When I have preached to you in extreme weakness, as I have often done, when I have afterwards read the sermon, I have been much more satisfied with it, than I have been with others in which I felt more pleasure at the time. God helps us most when we most need his help; and, besides that, the man himself is, by his weakness, forced to use himself right up. When a man feels himself to be rather a large vessel, he puts in the tap somewhere near the top, and only a small supply flows out to the people; but when he is, in his own feelings, like a poor little cask with only a small supply in it, he puts the tap right down at the bottom, and permits all that is in the barrel to flow forth. Many a poor, weak brother, who says all the little that he knows, gives forth more instruction than the learned divine who only favours his people with a small portion of his vast stores. When a man, in serving God, spends himself to the last farthing, he will often far more enrich his hearers than the man of ten talents who uses his resources with a prudent parsimony. Dear brother, it will often be a good thing for you to feel, "Now, God helping me, I must do my very utmost this time. I have so little ability that every faculty within me must be wide awake, and serve God at its best." Thus your weakness will arouse you, and set you on fire, and, by the blessing of God, it will be the means of gaining you strength.

Very well, then, let us pick up our tools and go to our work rejoicing, feeling—Well, I may be weaker, or I may be stronger in myself, but my strength is in my God. If I should ever become stronger, then I must pray for a deeper sense of weakness, lest I become weak through my strength. And if I should ever become weaker than I am, then I must hope and believe that I am really becoming stronger in the Lord. Whether I am weak or strong, what matters it? He who never fails and never changes, will perfect his strength in my weakness, and this is glory to me. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians xii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—691, 681, 689.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SETTING JESUS AT NOUGHT.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 11TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 2nd, 1888.

"And Herod with his men of war set him at nought."—Luke xxiii. 11.

IT is your Lord whom Herod set at nought! Once worshipped of angels and all the heavenly host, he is made nothing of by a ribald regiment. In himself "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person"; but now set at nought by men not worthy of the name. Soon to reassume all his former glory with the Father, and to descend in infinite splendour to judge the earth in righteousness, and reign as King of kings; and yet here he is set at nought! It is a sight of horror and of shame. How could angels bear to see it? This paltry prince and his rough retinue made nothing of him who is All in all; they treated him as beneath their contempt. The veriest abjects flouted him. The meanest soldier in the petty army of a petty princelet made unholy mirth of heaven's high Lord and earth's Redeemer. What a sorrowful and shameless business! May we be helped to sorrow over it! These wretches were of our race. May we mourn because of him! When the thorns of grief and repentance are at our breast, may God grant that they may act as lancets to let out the foul blood of our pride, for we, too, are partakers in this tremendous crime, since our sin involved our Saviour in the necessity of bearing this barbarous scorn.

Herod himself set him at nought. In this loathsome being I see the most likely person to think nothing of the Lord Jesus. Let me just say a word or two about this member of a detestable family, that I may see whether his like can be found here to-night. I will not give you any history of this Herod. It is not worth while. This "fox" is not worth unearthing. The page of history is stained by the Herodian name. I will give you enough concerning him to help you to answer the question—Are you like him? Have you set Christ at nought?

I. This shall be our first enquiry: WHO IS THE MOST LIKELY PERSON TO SET OUR LORD AT NOUGHT?

Herod was a man who had once heard the Word of God; yes, heard it with a measure of attention, and apparent benefit. We read, "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." According to the margin, Herod "kept him or saved him"—preserving him from those who would have laid violent hands upon him. But he broke away from his respectful regard of John, and now that Jesus stands before him, his memory of the Baptist does not restrain him from mocking the Baptist's Lord. He had silenced that eloquent tongue, and now he had no care to listen to anything which might further bestir his conscience. We often find that the greatest despisers of Christ are those who formerly were hearers and readers of his Word, but have turned from it. An apostate Methodist is a scoffer: a runaway Baptist is an infidel. It looks as if men must have some knowledge of the truth to be able to fight against it in the most malicious way. The viper must be warmed in the man's bosom that he may have strength to bite him. Is not this a wretched business? Am I talking to any here who, not so many years ago, were regular attendants upon a faithful ministry, but who have grown weary of it, and given it up? I do not know what reason you give; but I suppose the real reason is, that you love the world better than Christ, and so you have left his people and his Word. It troubles your conscience that you have done so, and now you try to conceal your uneasiness by picking holes in your former minister, and finding fault with the truths which he preached to you. I know the tricks and manners of apostates. Wanting an opiate for your consciences, you invent a fault in the gospel, or try to disbelieve it altogether. What an unhappy thing that the hopeful hearer should decline into a hopeless despiser! Herod heard John, but he ridiculed Jesus. See to what unconverted hearers may come!

If I look at Herod again, I see in him a man who, after hearing the Word faithfully preached, *had distinctly done violence to his conscience.* He heard John until John came home to him about the woman with whom he was living in an incestuous union. Herodias would have killed John at once; and though Herod did not dare to go so far as that, yet he shut him up in prison. A filthy lust must not be rebuked: Herod imprisons his reprover. He knew that John was right, and he trembled at his rebuke; but he could not give up his sin, and so he put the servant of God in a dungeon. He was held fast, as many a man before and since has been held fast, by an evil woman. She demanded of him that at the very least the man of God should be cast into prison. How dare he speak against what the prince chose to do? How dare a peasant censure so great a man as Herod about his personal life? So, instead of bowing before the supreme authority of right, and listening to the voice of truth as uttered by the Lord's Elijah, he must needs exercise his royal power, and lay his reprover by the heels. The man who could do this was in training for the more daring act of setting the Lord Jesus at nought. First despise the man, and then the Master. First do violence to

your better self, and then scoff at godliness. My friend, do you remember that night when you distinctly decided for the devil? Do you recollect when, after having the evil set before you, and seeing it, and counting the cost, you decided to continue in it? Then you turned with bitterness upon the honest reprover whose rebuke you had aforetime endured. Perhaps it was your wife upon whom you turned with anger. What hard words you said to her for the gentle remark she ventured to make! It was an effort for you. You gave conscience an awful wrench; and therefore you put yourself into a passion, and talked like an injured man. Or was it your brother? It may be you quitted his society in order to be free from his remarks. Was it your child, or your friend? You could not put them in prison; but you were determined that you would not bear any more of their protests. You abused and silenced them; not because you thought they were wrong, but because they made you feel that *you* were wrong. By all this you have prepared yourself to set the Lord at nought; and we cannot wonder that you do so.

This man also *had yielded to sinful companions, and had committed a gross sin as the result of it*, for when Herodias danced, and he promised to give her whatsoever she desired, she asked the head of John the Baptist in a charger; and he, not liking to break his word in the presence of the assembled guests, and not willing to stand out against the woman with whom he lived in unhallowed intercourse, yielded, and the Baptist's head was taken from his shoulders. Ah, well! you may not have sinned quite in that way; but you, too, once had better thoughts and higher aims. Your companions were too many for you, and drove all good out of you. I do not mention this that you may dare to cast the blame upon others of that which was really your own act and deed. If there had been a spark of true manhood in you, you would have resisted the suggestion of those enemies in the garb of friends. But you are soft and plastic, like wax, in the hand of evil; instead of being, as you ought to be, like granite towards evil, and like wax towards good. You now feel as if you had gone too far to turn back. You are now fixed in an evil estate. A black sin seems to bar the way to repentance. Truly, even now you will be welcomed to the bosom of mercy, but you are not anxious enough for it. It is a long lane that has no turning, but you seem to have got into such a lane, and you are driven along it by evil forces. This is the man that thinks nothing of Christ—the man who thinks so much of drinking and dancing, and of the companions which such things have brought around him. Of course he does not think anything of Christ, for his ways would take from him these vile associates. How should he value the holy Jesus? Will swine ever think much of pearls? It is vain that we set before you beauties for which you have no eyes, hopes for which you have no heart. Jesus cannot be valued by a man of Herod's sort, who puts so high a value upon the opinion of those who sit with him at his banquets.

Once more: the man who thinks nothing of Christ is the man that *means to go on in sin*, even as Herod did. The die was cast; his mind was made up for evil. He would be very glad to hear Christ: he has no objection still to go to a place of worship and listen to a

preacher. He would be very pleased to see a miracle: he would join in a revival, for he would be glad to enjoy something sensational, but he does not mean to give up the sin in which he lives, nor the company which eggs him on in it. He does not mean to cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye. Not he! He is too fond of the vice, too much ensnared and bird-limed by his passions; and so, as he gives his heart to his lust, he takes away his heart from Christ; nay, he treats religion with derision, because it is opposed to his bent and inclination. What a sad thing! I generally find, when man speaks against the Lord Jesus, that if you follow him home, he would rather not have you go indoors, for fear his inner life should be known. He does not want you to see the skeleton in the cupboard. I have so often met with this fact in actual life, that when I have heard a man speak bitterly of my Master, I have formed my opinion, and have not been wrong. A little enquiry has revealed so much that I have said, "It is not at all surprising that such a man should speak evil of Christ. It is as natural to such a man to talk against Christ as for a dog to bark." When a bad fellow once praised Socrates, that philosopher said, "I wonder what I can have been doing amiss, that such a man should speak well of me." If lustful lips praised the Saviour, one might begin to be afraid; but when they denounce and deride him, we feel that it is the only homage which vice can pay to purity.

This, then, is the man who sets Jesus at nought. I wonder whether he is here to-night! Possibly it is a woman who is doing this. Women fall into precisely the same evils as men from their own side of the house, and the same remarks apply to both sexes. You who once were hearers, you who once were impressed, you who did wilful violence to conscience, you who persist in sin, you who are the slaves of evil company, and dare not do right for the life of you, for fear of ridicule—you are the kind of people of whom Herod was a sad specimen: you set Jesus at nought.

II. Having tried to find out Herod, let us now answer a second question—ON WHAT GROUND DID HE SET OUR LORD AT NOUGHT?

Men have some reason or other for their acts, although often those reasons are most unreasonable. Before we consider the unhallowed reasons for this great crime, let us do homage to the name of the Son of God. O Lord Jesus, even in thy lowest humiliation thou art worthy of all reverence. To thy friends thou art all the more dear and the more honoured because thou wast greatly despised. Thou, bound and brought a prisoner before the tetrarch, art free to rule our hearts. Thou wert charged with sedition, but we fall at thy blessed feet, and proclaim thee King of kings!

Herod sets him up as the butt of his ridicule, and makes nothing of him. As Herbert puts it—

> "Herod and all his bands do set me light,
> Who teach all hands to war, fingers to fight,
> And only am the Lord of hosts and might.
> Was ever grief like mine?"

I suppose that part of the reason why he and his men of war made nothing of our Lord was *because of his gentleness and patience.* Our

Lord had no sword, and none of the temper of men who wear weapons. His visage was not like the face of a man of war: it was marred with grief, but not with anger; worn with sorrow, but not with battle. He was the lamb and not the lion, the dove and not the eagle, and therefore the fighting men despised him. If he had any weapons they were his tears and his almighty love; but these the Herodian ruffians utterly despised. All unarmed he stood before them, and when he was reviled he reviled not again. You know how men of muscular strength and physical bravado value men by their thews and bones, and think nothing of those who are feeble in arm and body. The Saviour, in his emaciation and faintness, must have seemed a poor creature to these hectors. The Christian religion teaches us to be meek and gentle, to forgive injuries, and even to give up our own rights rather than to inflict wrong. Such precepts savour of cowardice to the blustering world. Non-resistance they cannot hear of. They do not like the word "Forgive." "Surely," say they, "a worm will turn?" Thus they think so little of Christ that they prefer an earthworm's example to that of the Lord. The sweet savour of gentle forbearance, which the spirit of Jesus breathes into the hearts of his people, is by many held in contempt. They call it cant and hypocrisy, because it is so alien to their nature, so inconsistent with their ideas of manly conduct.

Furthermore, our Lord was ridiculed by Herod because *he refused to gratify his curiosity and amuse his love of sensation.* The wicked Herod virtually said to the holy Jesus, "Come, work us a miracle. We hear that thou didst deliver from death, now release thyself from our hands. We hear that thou didst multiply loaves and fishes, and feed multitudes, give us a banquet here. Thou canst do all things, so report says of thee—come, do some little thing that we may see and believe. Did not Moses work miracles before Pharaoh? Work a miracle before us." There stands our Lord, with all power in his hands, but he will not lift a finger for his own deliverance and Herod's amusement. O blessed Jesus, it is the same still, thou wilt not dazzle nor amuse, and therefore men prefer any charlatan to thee.

Herod then begins to question him. He asks him this, and that, and the other, with many a jest rolled in between; but he receives no answer. He who answered blind beggars when they cried for mercy is silent to a prince who only seeks to gratify his own irreverent curiosity. Then the men-at-arms laugh at their silent victim. "Why," they say, "the man is dumb. Either he can say nothing for himself, or he is obstinate and ill-mannered. He speaks not when he is spoken to. Has he lost his wits?" Thereupon they multiply their profane jests, and make nothing of the silent One. I do not doubt that often men turn away from the faith because their curiosity is not gratified, and they see nothing marvellous in it. A gospel for the age! A brand new gospel every year might suit them; but the old is stale: they know all about it, and sneer at it. Plain gospel is too plain for them. They desire adornment, or at least mystery, and the pomp which veils the unknown. They would rather go where there are gorgeous ceremonies, and mutterings in an unknown tongue amid the smoke of incense and the harmony of music. The simple gospel of "Believe

and live" does not suit them; for it seems fit only for the poor and unintellectual: thus they set Jesus at nought.

Moreover, the royal claims of Jesus excited their scorn. I think I hear the "Aha! aha! aha!" of Herod as he said, "Call *him* a King? You could find such kings as this in every street of Jerusalem. Talk of a kingdom for him! Go to the pool of Bethesda, and fetch up some poor wretch who lies waiting there for the moving of the water, and call him a king! King? What hosts art at thy command? What kingdom dost thou govern? What laws canst thou make? Here! Put the white robe upon him. Let him at least look like a monarch. Yes, that old robe will do! Is he not every inch a King?" Then the soldiery took up the jest! How bitterly, how derisively did they make his royalty the football of contempt! Thus to-day the world makes nothing of the royalty of King Jesus. A nominal king he may be, but as a real king they will not have him. Those who would be in the dust before the meanest princelet have no esteem for him. There is no pomp about the pure religion of Jesus; there is no glory of philosophy about his teaching; and so they set him and his cause at nought. Ah, me! what will a rebellious people do in the day when he appeareth to claim his throne and punish sedition?

Then, too, *they denied his prophetic office.* "Look!" said Herod, "he will not speak. I have asked him twenty questions, and he will not answer one of them. This is a pretty prophet! John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, but this man has no voice at all. A dumb prophet! Why, he is mute as a fish, and has nothing to say for himself." With such unhallowed merriment did Herod and his men of war set the Lord at nought. How they provoked him! But he stands in the majesty of his self-government, quiet to the end. Here was an omnipotence which restrained the lips of omnipotence. It was a wondrous power, that Godlike patience which enabled indignant holiness to withhold its word of condemnation. The prophet proved his commission by his silence; and yet he provoked their scorn, so that they set him at nought. At this time, because the Christian faith is silent upon a great many questions, certain men deride it. When men come to it with captious questions they receive no answer, and they are irritated thereby. When they idly demand a miracle, and it does not yield to their desires, they have fresh jeers for it. "You preach up the faith of Christ as the only true and divine religion: let us see it work wonders. Where are your miracles? We have asked you fifty questions about the past and the future, and you do not reply; where is the ground for your boastings?" Thus they make nothing of Christ, and disdain his claim to teach with authority.

Those, I suppose, were the grounds upon which Herod, and such as Herod, make light of Christ. Poor grounds they are, and such as will fail to justify them before the bar of God.

III. Now, dear friends, let us consider, HOW DO MEN NOW SET OUR LORD AT NOUGHT? Herod is dead and buried, and there is no sort of reason why we should not let him rot into oblivion. I therefore speak to you, and try to discover whether you are setting Christ at nought. I fear there are such. Who are they?

Some set him at nought, for *they will not even consider his claims.*

"Oh," say they, "we have plenty else to think about besides religion. What is there in it which will fill our pockets? There is nothing at all in it worth a moment's attention." How do they know? They do not know. Nothing in it? God gives his own Son to die for guilty men, and there is nothing in it! The highest thoughts of God are set forth in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you do not think it worth while even to consider what God has therein revealed? A man goes to a bookstall, and turns over a book. It is a novel: he reads a page, and would like to buy it. But suppose it is a book upon the glories of Christ. Does he read then? Does he wish to buy it? No, it is one of those dry theological books, and he shuts it up. He will make no bid for a volume on so dull a subject. He would like to know of Alexander the Great or even of Tom Thumb, but for the world's Redeemer he cares nothing. He makes nothing of Christ. Do I not convict some here present to-night? They have never set apart one solitary hour in their lives to the honest and candid consideration of the claims of Jesus, the divine Saviour. If it be so, you have indeed made Christ very cheap; and if you perish for lack of him, your blood be on your own heads! If this be the medicine that will heal your disease, and you huff at it, and will not even hear of the cures it has wrought, who is to blame if you perish? Who is to save the man who will not listen when salvation is put before him? Yet the great mass of our fellow citizens are of this kind. In London there are millions who make so little of Christ that they will not even come to hear what his ministers have to say about him, nor read their Bibles, nor show the least interest in the matter. In many a house in London Mahomet is practically as much esteemed as Jesus. Ah me!

There are *many others who prefer their business to Jesus.* They would not mind giving some little attention to the Lord Jesus, but then they are too busy just now. They say that they really cannot afford the time. O my busy hearer! you will have to find time to die before long: why not think of that solemn certainty? You are very busy, and yet you find time to eat. Have you no time to feed your soul? You find time to put on your dress, have you no time to dress your souls? You seek out the surgeon when you are ill; have you no time to seek out a Saviour for your sin-sick soul? Ah! it is not that: you have the time, but you have not the heart.

Others prefer amusements to the Lord Jesus. "Well," says one, "we must have recreation. In my spare time I like a game." I know that. I am not for denying you healthy recreation, but everything should be in order, and I claim first place for Jesus Christ and his salvation. What! is it not worth while to give up a sport to seek Jesus? Do you think a game of cards more important than seeking the pardon of your sin? An evening at the theatre or the music-hall; do you really think so little of Jesus that you can live without him, and satisfy your mind with these poor things? Can you suffer the paltry amusements of the world to stand before the Lord Jesus? Yet it is so with some of you: I wish it were not. My Master's blood and righteousness, the salvation of a soul from hell, the preparing of a heart for heaven—these are laid away in the lumber-room, to allow the childish pleasures of a vain world to engross your thoughts. You will know better one day. God

grant you may learn wisdom while yet it may be of use to you. Too late! What awful words! May you even now feel that if the Son of God has lived and died for men, it is of the first importance that you put business and pleasure in their proper places, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Another sort of persons make nothing of Christ, because *they profess to see nothing profound and philosophical in the faith* which he has revealed. These are the Greeks, to whom the doctrine of the cross is foolishness. O foolish Greeks! These wise men will not hear some of us because we can be understood of the people. "Anybody can understand you," say they, "you speak after the manner of the crowd, and what you say is simple enough to be clear to the most ignorant. We like something deeper, something too profound to be readily grasped. We are above common-place people, and need something more intellectual and philosophical." A man of note once said to me, "Why do you keep on preaching to those thousands at Newington? Preach so that the mob will leave you, and the *élite* will support you." To whom I answered, that if one man's soul was of less value than another, his was of the least value who could talk so slightingly of others. Those who make no pretence to culture, are often far more sensible people than those who affect superiority. The man who thinks that he is intellectual, and talks in that fashion, is a miserable snob, and has scarcely a soul at all. When a man despises the multitude, he deserves to be despised himself. But, my dear sir, if the salvation of Christ be very simple, and very plain, is it not so much the better? Have you not enough of philanthropy to make you feel that if you could have a gospel only for the *élite*, it would be a matter of deep regret? Is not a gospel for the multitude the thing to be desired? Do you not desire the vast mass to be saved? I hope you do. But I fear you make nothing of Christ when you despise his gospel because you imagine that it is not deep enough and philosophical enough for you. The most profound science in the world is the science of the cross! Christ himself is the highest wisdom, for he is the wisdom of God.

Others make nothing of the Lord because *they confide in themselves*. They think themselves quite good enough without a Saviour. If they are not quite perfect, they believe that they can make themselves so, and be saved without an atoning sacrifice, or a new heart, or union to Christ. They are doing their best, and they make no doubt whatever that they will find their way to heaven as well as others. Do you thus think? You are in grave error. There was a learned Romanist who once ventured to say that if salvation could only be had on terms of free grace, he would not have it. Do you know what happened? Why, he did not have it: that was all. And that is what will happen to you. If you will not have salvation as a free gift of grace, without any merit wherewith to purchase it, then you must go without it, and perish in your sin; for the terms of free grace will never be altered to suit the pride of the human heart. If any man sets up his righteousness in the place of Jesus Christ, the sin-removing Lamb, why then he has made nothing of Christ, and the Lord will make less than nothing of him. Alas! that any man should be so profane as to think

himself so good that he does not need God's grace and the atoning blood! Such pride insults the Lord Christ, and will bring sure destruction upon the man who is guilty of it.

I have no doubt that there are many also who make nought of Christ because *they have no conscience whatever as to his present claims upon them.* O dear sirs, if you did but know his kindness to the sons of men, even to his enemies, and how he sought them with his tears, and then bought them with his blood, you would feel forced to love him.

> "Sure Christ deserves the noblest place
> In every human heart."

Truly know Jesus, and you must love him. But some men do not think that they owe him anything, or are in any need of him. It is nothing to such that he died, for they did not require his death to save them: in their judgment they are not lost. Those who are of this mind will leave this Tabernacle to-night, and will go back to the world just as they came in, practically saying, "Whether Jesus lived or whether he died, and whatever he did or was, I care nothing, for I owe him nothing." And yet you owe him everything. You had not been here to-night if it were not for the mercy which has spared you, and which has come to you through him. The axe would have had you down long ago but for his intercession. There had been no gospel to set before you to-night if it had not been for the death agony of the Lord Jesus. You owe the very opportunity of hearing the gospel, and the opportunity of accepting it to his dying love. Oh, that you had a conscience which would make you just towards Jesus! Oh, that you felt that you were bound to love him and live for him, because of all that he has done for guilty men!

As they have no conscience of his claims upon them, so many *have no fears concerning the day of his appearing.* Whether you believe it or not, Jesus, as your Judge, is at the door. He said, years ago, "Behold, I am coming quickly." He is still coming, and must soon arrive to commence the last dread session of justice. What matters it how many more years may elapse? They will fly like the wind. The day will come when heaven and earth shall be ablaze. The thick darkness will lower down,

> "And, withering from the vault of night,
> The stars shall pale their feeble light."

The hour will come when the earth and sky will rock and reel, and pass away, rolled up like a worn-out vesture. Then shall the trumpet ring out exceeding loud and long — "Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment!" How will you endure that voice which shall disturb the stillness of the sepulchre? "Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment!" How it will peal forth! None of you will be able to resist the call. From your beds of dust you will start up amazed to a terrible awakening. From the sea, from the land, from the teeming cemetery, from the lonely grave, men will rise, and all of them stand before Christ! In that day you will see nothing but the great white throne, and him that sits upon it. You will be unable to close

your eyes, or to turn your gaze elsewhere. There will he sit, and you will know him by his scars.

"How resplendent shine the nail-prints!
Every eye shall see him move."

Still shall the trumpet thrill out the summons, "Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!" And you must come, whether you will or not; and if you have despised the Lord as Saviour, you will tremble before him as Judge. You will then hear his voice, which in itself is sweeter than the harps of heaven, but to the ungodly it will be more full of thunder than the crash of tempest—"Depart! Depart! Depart!" O my hearer, what will then become of you? The prospect is terrible: but you have no concern about it. To die, to rise, to be judged, to be condemned: you take no account of it. Like Herod, you set him at nought. How dare you do so? How dare you despise the great Judge? Ah, my Lord, have mercy upon them! Have mercy upon them now, and turn them from doing to thee and to themselves this grievous wrong of making nothing of the Lord of all. They set him at nought!

This is very heavy preaching to me. If it is as painful to you to hear as to me to speak, you will be glad when I have done. I pray that these solemn words may long remain upon your hearts. Oh, that they might bring you to Jesus at once by the power of the Holy Ghost!

IV. But I close with this: WHAT DO BELIEVERS SAY ABOUT THEIR LORD? Herod made nothing of him: what do we make of him?

Well, we say, first, that *we mourn and lament that there ever was a time when we ourselves made nothing of the glorious One.* It is many years ago with some of us; but we cannot forget it, nor cease to bewail it. There were a certain number of years in our lives in which it was nothing to us that Jesus should die. O my dear hearers, perhaps some of you have been lately converted after forty, or fifty, or sixty years of sin. Repent with all your hearts that you were Herods so long. Christ has forgiven you; but can you forgive yourselves? No; I think that you still smite on your breast, and say, "Lord, I grieve that ever I lived a moment without acknowledging my Lord—that I ever ate a meal or drew in a breath without bowing before him." Lord, bury those years in forgetfulness which we spent in forgetfulness of thee!

Next, *it is now our grief that any others should set the Lord Jesus at nought.* It must be a great grief to any man here if she who lies in his bosom sets the Lord at nought. Dear woman, I know what your daily burden must be if the husband who is so dear to you does not love your Saviour, whom you love with a higher love. What an anguish it is to nourish and bring up children, and see them refuse our Lord! "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth"; and no greater sorrow than to see them running into evil ways. Could we really see the heart of an unregenerate man or woman it would cause us the utmost distress. If we felt as we ought to feel, if there were only one unconverted person in this Tabernacle, we should make a Bochim of it till that heart was yielded to Christ. If there

existed only one man or woman who did not love the Saviour, and if that person lived amongst the wilds of Siberia, and if it were necessary that all the millions of believers on the face of the earth should journey thither, and every one of them plead with him to come to Jesus, before he could be converted; it would be well worth all the zeal, and labour, and expense of all that effort. One soul would repay the travail in birth of myriads of zealous Christians. Lord, we cannot bear it that there should go on existing men and women who make nothing of the bleeding Son of God! It is an awful thing: as awful as hell itself! Out in that street to-night think of the thousands who will be hunting for the precious life. Walk along our crowded thoroughfares, and think of the myriads even of this city who live and die without God, and without hope, making nothing of Jesus, and you will feel a heartbreak which will make life a burden. I could wish that you felt that heartbreak for their sakes, and for Christ's sake.

But then, dear friends, what do we make of Christ ourselves now? Well, that I cannot tell you, except it be in one word—*Christ is all.* Herod made nothing of him; we make everything of him.

> "All my capacious powers can wish,
> In thee doth richly meet;
> Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
> Nor friendship half so sweet."

Could any of you who love my Lord tell me what you think of him? I am sure that you would break down in the attempt. For my own part, I always fail in the glad endeavour.

> "When my tongue would fain express
> All his love and loveliness,
> Then I lisp and falter forth
> Broken words not half his worth."

If we could give every drop of our blood for Jesus; if we could be burnt at a slow fire for a century for him, he deserves all our suffering and all our life. Could our zeal no respite know, a whole eternity of service would not adequately set forth what we think of him.

I close with this practical thought. Sometimes believers show their love and their appreciation of their Master by special acts of homage. Herod, you see, when he made nothing of him, said, "Here, bring out that glittering white robe of mine, and put it on him, that we may heap contempt upon him. He calls himself a King! Let us pay him homage!" They mocked him, and they put the robe upon him, and then sent him back to Pilate. Now, I want you to imitate Herod in the opposite direction. Let us do our Lord special honour to-night. Let us crown him. As soon as we have opportunity, let us make some special offering of our substance to his cause. Let us set apart a season for adoration and reverent worship. Let us resolve that for his sake we will speak well of his name to somebody to whom we have not yet spoken. It may be that some of you can sing a hymn to Jesus with choice music, or write a glorious verse for his dear sake. Go, take your pen, and dip it in your heart, and write a fresh tract in honour of his blessed name. Herod set him at nought, but let us set

him on high in our best manner. Set him at the highest figure that your thought and your imagination can reach. It may be that some brother here could preach about his Lord, and yet he has not opened his mouth from timidity. Come, try, my friend. Shake off your bashfulness. It may be that some sister here might teach women, or get together a class of youngsters, and glorify Christ by instructing them. I long to undo what Herod did, and pay the Well-beloved a recompense for his shame. Oh, how would I honour him! But what am I? What can one person do? Come, all of you, my brethren, and help to cry "Hosanna!" Alas! what are we all together? The music has no volume in it, compared with what he deserves. Come, all ye saints, and worship him! And what are all the saints on earth? Come, ye in heaven, who bear the palm, redeemed, perfected, and white-robed as ye are; come, worship him who washed your robes in his own blood! And what are all they? Even the armies of the redeemed suffice not. Come, all holy ones and praise him!

"Angels, assist our mighty joys!
Strike all your harps of gold!
But when *you* raise your highest notes,
His love can ne'er be told."

Therefore do I summon all things that are to praise the Lord, without whom was not anything made. I charge all living things to adore him who is the resurrection and the life. Let space become one great mouth for song. Let time unceasingly flow with hallelujahs. Let eternity become an orchestra to the praise of Jesus, who was mocked of Herod and his men of war. Glory be to his name! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xxiii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 802, 580.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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"ON HIS BREAST."

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-day, November 18th, 1888,

Delivered at the Lord's Supper by

C. H. SPURGEON,

at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon."—John xiii. 23—26.

Picture the Lord and his apostles at the holy Supper. A world of interest centres here. Two figures strangely different met in this scene—met, shortly afterwards to part, and never to meet again. To look upon them, they seemed equally disciples of Jesus, and from the position which one of them occupied, as leaning on the Lord's bosom, and the other as the treasurer of the Master's little store, they seemed to be equally trusted and honoured followers of the great Lord. You might not have known, by mere sight, which was the better man of the two—John or Judas. Most probably you would have preferred the gentle manners of John; but I should suppose —for our Lord never chose a man to an office unless he had some qualification—you would also have admired the calm prudence of Judas, and his quiet business tact. No doubt you would have thought that he made an excellent treasurer, and you would have been glad that your Master, with so little to spare, had lighted upon so vigilant a guard and so prudent a manager. They sat at the same table, engaged in the same exercises, and looked much the same kind of men. None of us would have guessed that one of them was John the divine, and the other was Judas the devil. One of them was the seer of the Apocalypse, the other was the son of perdition.

No doubt there are strange mixtures of character in this very house to-night. There will come to this table the disciple whom Jesus loves. Him we will welcome, saying, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord." Alas! there may come here a son of perdition. Him we cannot chase away, for we cannot read his heart. For a time both may act and even feel alike; they may even wear well for years. Apparently they may be equally sincere; and yet the day will come when to the right,

in his love and his integrity, the faithful disciple will wend his way up to his Master's bosom for ever; and to the left, the hypocrite will go to his dreadful end, and to that hell which must receive such traitors as he. There is something very solemn about this meeting of such strangely different characters in one common act, and in the society of the same divine Lord. John is here; is Judas here? Let the question be started and passed round, "Lord, is it I?" He is the least likely to be the traitor who is nearest to his Lord's heart. He who occupies such a place as John did is not the betrayer. Oh that we might be fired with a loving ambition to be the disciple whom Jesus loved, leaning on Jesus' bosom! for then, though we ask the question, "Lord, is it I?" it will not linger long upon our hearts; for his love, shed abroad within them, shall answer every question of self-examination, and we shall cry, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Let that stand as an introduction. Glance at yourself and your brethren at the table, and say—How far shall *we* be like our Lord and the twelve? Will Peter, and James, and John, and Judas all live over again in the assembly of to-night for the breaking of bread?

And now our remarks will be very simple.

I. And the first is this—SOME DISCIPLES ARE SPECIALLY LOVED OF THEIR LORD. We believe in the doctrine of election, but the principle of election goes to be carried farther than some suppose. There is an election in the midst of the election, and another within that. The wider circle contains the inner, and a still more select circlet forms the innermost ring of all. The Lord had a people around him who were his disciples. Within them he had twelve. Within the twelve he had three. Within the three he had one disciple whom he loved. And I suppose that what took place around his blessed person on earth takes place on a larger scale around his adorable person which is the centre of his church both militant and triumphant. Probably our Lord's attachment to John was partly a human one; and so far as it was human, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now after the flesh know we even him no more. Any merely human affection which our Lord Jesus bore for John may have passed away. There may, also, have been such affection in Jesus toward John as there would be in any eminent Christian towards another Christly believer—in anyone whom the Lord made to be a leader of his church, towards such and such a member of that church in whom he could see most of the lovely characteristics of Christ. I cannot but think that it was so. But it strikes me that our Lord Jesus loved John in some measure more than the rest, in the entirety of his character, as Jesus Christ, the Son of God as well as the Son of man. We know that he loved all his disciples; for when my brother read the chapter just now, how like music did those words sound, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end"! He loved not some of his own; but all of them. He loved all his own then, and he loves all his own now. There is infinite love in the heart of Jesus towards all his people; and if there be any degrees in that love, yet the lowest degree is inconceivably great. The very least member of the divine family may say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." He loves us beyond all human expression,

because beyond all human conception. The great heart of the eternal Father, the great heart of the eternal Son, the great heart of the ever-blessed Spirit, the great heart of the Trinity in unity, beats with love, with love to all the elect, to all the redeemed, to all the called, to all the sanctified people of God. We are quite sure of this. Yet that love has this difference about it, that it is more enjoyed by some on earth than by others.

It is clear, as a matter of fact, that the divine love is manifested to some more clearly than to others. My beloved brethren, you must know this to be the case; for there are those among us who walk with God, who enjoy the light of Jehovah's countenance at all times, who, if depressed, have the art of rolling their burden upon the Lord, and soon are delivered from it. You know them, they are the brethren who feel like singing all the while, for Jesus is their friend, and they rejoice in him. There was one in the Old Testament who was called "a man greatly beloved," and there are Daniels on earth even now. Christ has among women still his Maries, whom he loves. He loved Martha, too; but still there was a special place for Mary. Jesus has still his Johns, whom he peculiarly loves. He loves Peter and Nicodemus, and Nathanael, and all of them; but still there are some who know his love more than others, live in it more than others, drink into it more than others, reflect it more than others, and become more conformed to it, and saturated with it, and perfumed with it, than others are. There are first as well as last. All may be of Israel, but all the tribes are not Judah, and in Judah all the men are not Davids. Who shall deny that there are degrees in grace? Have we not among us babes, and young men, and fathers? Have we not first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear? It is so; and though I will not argue for degrees in glory, and, indeed, deprecate the spirit in which the doctrine of degrees in glory is often set forth; yet we are sure, for we see it with our eyes, that there are degrees of grace, and especially degrees in the enjoyment of the love of Jesus. Amongst those who do really love their Lord, and are really loved by him, one star differeth from another in the glory of that love.

Why was John made "that disciple whom Jesus loved"? Certainly it was not because he was naturally higher in rank than the others, for he was a fisherman, like the most of them; and James was certainly equal in birth, for he was his brother. Our blessed Lord did not love John because of any excess of talent; for albeit that John's Apocalypse and his Gospel are, in some respects, the highest parts of revealed Scripture, being both the simplest and the most mysterious portions of Holy Writ; yet we should not say that John betrayed evidence of so great a mind in itself, naturally, or by education, as Paul had. He had as much talent as his Lord gave him, but there was nothing about him so special that he should for that cause have been loved; and to dismiss the thought with a word, Jesus never loves men on account of talent, and we should be unwise if we ourselves did so. These things are external to the man. Our Lord loved John, specially, for a better reason than that.

Why did our blessed Lord love John better than others? I can only reply that he exercises a sovereignty of choice, and it is not for

us to ask the why and wherefore of the movements of the sacred heart. Surely, nothing should be left so free as the love of the Son of God. Let him love whom he wills; he has an unquestionable right to do so.

But if we venture reverently to look into the familiar love of Jesus, we shall not fail to see that there was about John, through grace, a most loving spirit. Men love those that are like them, and Jesus, as man, loved John because the processes of grace had developed in John the image of Jesus. John, like his Lord, had much love. He may have lacked some qualities in which Peter, and James, and others excelled, but he towered above them all in love. He was full of tenderness, and therefore his Master at once selected him to be his choicest companion and his dearest friend. You know the way, then, to the heart of Christ. Let your own heart be full of love, and you will know his love. He loves you, you know, altogether apart from anything that is in you, of his own rich and sovereign grace; but for the special manifestation of that love, for your personal enjoyment of it, to fit you for such enjoyment, you must have much love to him. You greatly need, not a great head, but a great heart. You must have, not more knowledge, but more affection; not a higher rank in society, but a higher rank in the power to love Jesus and to love your fellow-men. Less of self, and more of Jesus, and then you shall enjoy more of his love.

This being the case, that John had this loving spirit, and our Lord Jesus Christ loved him more than others, it led on to the fact that John was the recipient of confidences from Christ which others had not. I will show you that farther on; but certainly it seems to me that John was made by Jesus his executor, and he left him in his will all his earthly possessions. You will say to me, "And pray what possessions had the Master?" Well, he had one possession of which he was very fond, and he could not die until he had disposed by his last will and testament of that one earthly possession. It was his mother. He loved her, and must care for her; and there passed a little word, a kind of sign, between him and John at the last moment. Do not think that John would have understood what Jesus meant when he said: "Woman, behold thy son," and, "Son, behold thy mother!" if there had not been a quiet talk about that matter some time before. But Jesus, I doubt not, had told John that the only earthly care he had, as man, was that while he was away slumbering in the grave he would have his mother cared for still, and so he left her in John's charge. If you love Jesus Christ very much, he will leave something in your charge, depend upon that; and the more you love him, the more will he trust you with some loving commission which he would not trust with anybody else. I have known him leave a dear child of his, some dear old saint, for a favoured believer to look after, whom he never would have had to look after if Jesus had not said: "I love this dear old saint, and I shall commit him—I shall commit her—to the custody of such a one, because he loves me, and he will take care of this poor one for my sake." Some of you have nobody to care for. Little know you of Christ's trustfulness towards you: he has not trusted you with anything. Do you not grieve to think that you lack this token of his special love? As sure as ever there is any intimate love between Jesus and any soul, he trusts that soul with

something to be done, to be endured, to be guarded, to be mourned over, or in some way to become a sacred trust. Thus love has occupation, proof, and expression, and this she ever longs for. I know my Master loves me, and I rejoice in his love; and sometimes, when I think of all this great church, and the College, and the Orphanage, and the many cares the whole service brings into my heart, I have said, "Have I begotten all this multitude, that I should carry all of them in my bosom, and bear their griefs, and be troubled with their troubles?" and the answer has always seemed to come to me, "Thou lovest me, and I trust thee to look after these souls, to help them, and care for them, for my sake." It is so with you that have classes to look after, or families to care for: attend to them, for Jesus' sake. If it be only one little one, hear Jesus say, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." You have a charge, each one; and if you have none, I should be afraid you may be Judas, for I cannot think you are John. Had there been the love between you and the Lord which existed between John and Jesus, Jesus would have whispered into your ear about somebody of whom he would say, "Care for him; care for him for my sake"; and you would have answered, "Lord, that I will: the more thou givest to me to do for thee, the more happy will I be, because I love thee, and because this trust proves that thou dost love me."

There is the first head: we perceive Jesus loves some of his disciples more than others.

II. Now, secondly, we note that THE BELOVED ONES COUNT THIS TO BE THEIR GREATEST HONOUR. This is evidently in the text; for John, who wrote these words, called himself "one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved"; and I think three times besides he speaks of himself as "that disciple whom Jesus loved." He took his name from his Lord's love, which he evidently counted to be his greatest honour. This was John's most notable title. As a servant of the Queen, having distinguished himself in the service of Her Majesty, becomes the lord of such and such a town, and he takes the name of the place as a name of honour, so John drops his own birth-given name, as it were, and takes this title instead of it—"that disciple whom Jesus loves." He wears it as a Knight of the Garter, or of the Golden Fleece, wears the mark of his sovereign's esteem. He took it for his honour; and yet, beloved, there was not a grain of boasting in it, nor even an approach to glorying in the flesh. A sense of love makes us happy, but not haughty. How can I proudly boast that Jesus loves me? If you are loved of him, you will feel that you so little merit it—indeed, that you so altogether demerit it—that you will be amazed to think that he loves you, and it will never enter into your head that his love is your due. You will take the title of love, but you will give the honour back to Jesus, and often you will say,

> "And when I shall die, 'Receive me,' I'll cry,
> For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why."

You will not be able to tell why the Lord loves you so specially. This will be the wonder of eternity. But there will be no pride in the experience of being dear to the Lord, nor anything to excite self-

laudation. You will feel that it would be a wicked thing to deny his matchless love, but yet you will not carnally triumph over others because of it. There would be pride in the affectation of a modesty which would doubt the love of Jesus, but there is no pride in the reception of that love, since you yourself are so evidently, so conspicuously undeserving, that no one will dream that Jesus could have loved you because there was anything good in you.

Now, had John been proud he would have altered the title thus. He would have said, "That disciple who loved Jesus." This would have been true, though not modest. There was, as far as his heart was capable of it, a reciprocity of love between John and Jesus. If Jesus loved him, he loved Jesus; but John never called himself "That disciple who loved Jesus." No, for he felt as if his own love was altogether unworthy of mention in the presence of the love of Jesus.

Then notice also, as if to show us that there was no pride in taking the title, that he does not say, "John was the disciple whom Jesus loved." We gather from other facts that it was John. All the traditions and beliefs of the early church went to testify that it was John. We have not, any of us, any doubt about the fact that it was John. It has, as it were, leaked out; but John nowhere says that he was the man. All that he has said is, "That disciple whom Jesus loved"; and thus he makes the love more conspicuous than the person who received it. We know that it must have been John, for many reasons; but still he does not say so. He hides John behind the love of Jesus, which proves that John gloried in the love of Christ, but did not boast of it egotistically. Bengel tells us, that John's name means "the love of Jehovah." If you look at Cruden's translation, in the list of the meanings of names in the Concordance, he puts it "the grace of God," the grace of Jehovah. Bengel reads it "the love of the Lord": so John just altered the name a little, and paraphrased it when he wrote, "whom Jesus loved." It would go into shorter compass if he put it in the Hebrew, and would need but little alteration. Sometimes when men succeed to estates, it is a condition that they shall change their names: in this case the name was very little altered from "the loved one of God" into the "loved one of Jesus Christ"; and there is no alteration (is there?) in the real meaning of it. When he said, "That disciple whom Jesus loved," it was John "writ large." That is all. It was John a little altered under the New Testament dispensation, the old name sweetened and perfumed by bringing it near to the sweeter name of Jesus Christ his Lord. So precious has its nearness to Jesus made it, that perhaps next to the name of Jesus no name is sweeter than that of John. As Ivan, or Evan, it has a most evangelical, gospel sound. It is common in many forms throughout Christendom, and many of the noblest disciples have worn it, from John Chrysostom to John Calvin, and from John Bunyan to John Wesley, and John Newton. In any case the honour of being loved by Jesus is greater than the name John; and happy are they who can claim it!

There are some, then, whom Jesus loves more than others, and these men always count that love to be their highest honour.

III. A step farther. A third remark—that THIS SPECIAL LOVE

BRINGS SUCH MEN SPECIAL PRIVILEGES. It brought to John the first privilege of *being very near to Jesus, his Lord.* At that supper he was nearest to the place which Jesus occupied. You know they lay along at the supper somewhat in this fashion—leaning upon the left arm, so as to have the right with which to help themselves to each dish. Now, John lay here, and Jesus Christ lay just there; so that, when John turned a little backward there was the bosom of Jesus for him to put his head upon; and I suppose that when John asked the question, "Lord, who is it?" he turned his head over, and said into his very ear, "Lord, who is it?" Nobody heard what he said. It was just whispered into the ear of his Lord when his head was in that sacred bosom; and the answer was not heard by anybody except John. But his position of being nearest was brought about by his being best loved. He was nearest in fellowship because dearest in love. Now, beloved, if you are best loved by Christ, you live nearest to him. I am sure of it. If you love him best, and he loves you best, you will be more in prayer than others; you will spend more time alone with Jesus than other Christians do. You will abound in petition and praise. You will read his Word with greater diligence; you will drink it in with greater delight. You will live for him, too, with greater consecration. Your whole time will be spent in his company. When you are at your work in the house, or the field, or the shop, you will still be with him. If you are better loved than others, your daily song will be—

> "The day is dark, the night is long,
> Unblest with thoughts of thee,
> And dull to me the sweetest song,
> Unless its theme thou be."

"He feedeth among the lilies," and keeps near the pure in heart. Our Well-beloved's delights are with those who delight in him. You will be close to Jesus if you are dear to him. The two things go together. If you are living far away in the cold regions of broken fellowship, then I am sure you have but very little conscious enjoyment of the love of Jesus Christ your Lord. The dearest must be the nearest. That is the first privilege.

The second was the privilege of *using and receiving tokens of endearment.* He leaned his head on Jesus' bosom, looking up into his face; and Jesus looked down on him. There was mutual endearment, for Jesus loved him, and he loved Jesus; and that night, when the blessed Master was in trouble, he wanted his friend with him, and felt a need for John, though he could not help him much. Jesus felt a need of John's society and sympathy, and it made Christ's bosom all the easier to have John's beloved head in it. As for John, it must have been a heaven below to be thus in the bosom of his Lord. He mentions it three times, you see; twice in this passage, and once in the last chapter of his gospel, where there was no necessity for mentioning it. He had such a recollection of his head having once been laid on his Lord's breast, that he must put it in when he is speaking about Peter and himself. He says, "The disciple which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?"

He must needs repeat the charming fact, for it was such a delight to him. O beloved, we cannot now touch the bosom of Jesus after the flesh, for he is gone up on high; but there are still most sweet endearments of spirit between the Lord Jesus and his loving disciples. I must not tell abroad the secrets of love, for these things are for those that know them, and not for all comers. Choice passages between true hearts are not to be published in the street, lest they become the theme of ridicule. Pearls are not to be cast before swine. But believe me, at this moment we have, or at least we can have, such intimate enjoyment of the love of Jesus, that even if he were here, and we could lean our heads upon his bosom, the endearment could not be more certain, more sweet, or more ravishing to our delighted souls. In very truth we have fellowship with Jesus, and that fellowship is no dream or fancy. We speak no fiction, neither do we retail at second-hand what others have experienced, but we speak of things which we have personally enjoyed; and we know that there is an intimate communion which is one of the private privileges of those whom Jesus loves much, for it has been our privilege. I hope very many of you know this choice blessing of living in the immediate enjoyment of your Saviour's love. May you never lose it!

Then is there a third boon, not only of nearness and endearment, but of *confidence towards the Lord;* for it was a bold thing, surely, for John to lean his head on Christ's bosom. Our Lord did not say, "Nay, John; nay. I am thy Master, and thy Lord. Dost thou do this to me as if I were thine equal?" No. The meaning of that blessed text, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," runs in other directions besides that which we generally think of. If you come to Jesus in the most intense manner, he will not repulse you. If your head shall come into his bosom, he will not cast your head out. If you can get your very heart into his heart and come closer to him than even John dared to do—if you carry that coming beyond all previous comings, yet Jesus neither will nor can resent the nearest approaches of any one of his believing people. We lose a great deal of Christ's loving fellowship because we are so formal and distant towards him. We seem to think that he came among men to show them their distance from God, and not to be as a brother to them, to reveal God to them. Jesus seeks to reach our hearts, he stoops to our littleness; let us pluck up courage to draw near to him. Well does our hymn put it—

> "Let us be simple with him, then,
> Not backward, stiff, or cold;
> As though our Bethlehem could be
> What Sinai was of old."

Lean on him. Lean on the bosom of the Christ of God, who loveth us, and hath given himself for us. Make a confidant as well as a confidence of your Lord. Put all the weight of your care, all the weight of your whole self and all that concerns you upon him, and then recline with delight upon his bosom. There was a gracious confidence given to John, which he rightly used towards his Lord.

Surely there was *a great liberty* given to him. Some would have

said he took a liberty in thus leaning where no head of king or emperor might aspire to rise. He was the most honoured of all human beings; but surely he took great liberties. No, he did not, for the Lord himself gave him access with boldness. Great love has privileges which make her boldest advances no intrusion. Love has the key of all the rooms of the Father's house. Love has the range of Paradise. Love may read the very heart of God. Love may come where she wills, and go unchallenged. John said to our Saviour, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus looked down at him and said, as if he did not want the others to know at all, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop." He had just to watch a little while. I do not know but it is not improbable, that Judas was next at the table—John here, then Jesus, and then Judas. Very likely Judas was pretty close to the Lord; for if a man has your purse you want him near you, so as to tell him what you wish to have done with the money. So, when Jesus just turned over and gave a sop to Judas, John knew the meaning of the act. Judas had had his conscience disturbed, I should think, by the utterance of the Saviour, when he said, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me," and by the question of each of the others, "Lord, is it I?" Judas himself asked that question for a time; but he grew calm again, and became reassured, and thought he should not be found out, until the Lord dipped a piece of meat, according to the Oriental custom, in the sauce of the dish, and passed it to him. Even then Judas possibly thought, "This is an act of great friendship. He evidently has the utmost confidence in me, and has not found me out." Little did he know that the sop was the token of the discovered traitor. Then Judas said, "Lord, is it I?" thinking he should get a pleasant answer, but Jesus answered that it was even he, and added, "What thou doest, do quickly." There that matter ended. But John was thus the recipient of friendly confidence on the part of Christ: he told to Jesus his heart, and Jesus told him his heart. He had liberty to go to Christ. Ah, brethren! do you never feel in prayer as if you were tied up and could not pray? The best of saints will be bound about some things. People come and ask you to pray for this, and pray for that; but you cannot so pray unless you have liberty from the throne. If God gives the prayer of faith, you can pray it; but you cannot pray that prayer at your own will. He that can most often pray the prayer of faith, he that can see farthest into Christ's mysteries, he that can read the riddles of this divine Samson, is the man whose heart loves Jesus best, and whose head lies most in the bosom of his Lord. Be you sure of this, that if you love much, you shall know the secret of the Lord, for it is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.

Now a step farther, and a very little more, and we have done. This creates *special knowledge*. I merely give it as a head to help your memories, for I have already dwelt upon it as a matter of fact. The special privileges of love lead on to a special knowledge of Christ. I do not think that any other evangelist notices Christ's emotion at the supper in the matter of his spirit as John has done. He writes, "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit," and so on. John was so close to the Lord, with his head on his breast, that he

could tell, by the heaving of his bosom, that he was troubled. The mind of God is not so revealed to any man now that he can set up to foretell the future like a prophet; but, mark you, the choice ones amongst the saints have intimations of the mind of God about many things. Those who live at court can often foresee the king's movements when others cannot. It is my firm conviction that favoured believers have tokens, warnings, and hints from above. Did not the Lord say, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Even the choicest spirits may not understand the Lord's meaning all at once; but if any man can read anything of the future, it is he that puts his head where all eyes grow clear, and all hearts become pure, even upon the breast of Jesus. Oh, to know Christ! The day will come when the saints of God who are great classics, mathematicians, or astronomers—and there have been godly men skilled in all the sciences—the day, I say, shall come when these will count all they know of science to be of little worth compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. Brethren, we value knowledge, culture, science; but when we put them at their highest market price, what are they as compared with the knowledge of Jesus? This is my one ambition—that I may know him, and may comprehend with all saints what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. If you love your Lord, you shall know of his doctrine. If you live near him, you shall understand his feelings. If his secret be with you, you shall know what prophets and kings desired to know, and what angels desire to look into. The Lord bless you, and bring each one of you who are his people into this happy condition.

I have done, when I notice two things. The first is this—that *the favoured position which John occupied did not screen him from the necessity of asking the question*, "*Lord, is it I?*" There really was no suspicion of him, nor any reason for such suspicion; but his heart was in a right state, and, therefore, he felt it necessary to say, "Lord, is it I?" as well as any of the rest. And I make this remark because the very persons who do not say, "Lord, is it I?" are those who ought to say it. If you are enjoying more of God's love to-night than ever you did in your life, yet do not profess to have climbed above the need of self-examination. When the question comes, "Art thou really one of his?" do not chase it away, as if it were an impertinence. Entertain the enquiry till you can satisfy it with a sufficient answer. Some professors can afford to sneer at holy anxiety. May I never be of their number! I have heard them ridicule the question—

> "Do I love the Lord or no?
> Am I his, or am I not?"

Now, I do not hesitate to say that every man who loves the Lord has had to ask that question; and has had to ask it all the more because the truth and fervency of his love have made him jealous of himself. He has such an overwhelming sense of what his love ought to be, and he has such a consciousness of shortcoming, that he is quite sure to say, "Do I love the Lord?" It is not your bold talker that is your true lover after all. There is a confidence which is fatal.

"He who never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may too late."

If thou sayest, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," whilst thou art naked, and poor, and miserable, it will be a sad deception, and the awakening out of it will be sadder still.

But if thou sayest, "Oh that I loved my Redeemer more! Oh that I served him better! But I do love him. My heart is his, and he does love me," then thou hast answered the question of, "Lord, is it I?" and thou mayest go thy way contented.

The other remark, with which I finish, is this: *that John's nearness to Christ did not authorize him to make answer to his fellow disciples, nor to judge any one of them.* Time was when John might have sat in judgment over them. Did he not desire to sit upon a throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel with his brother James? But now that he has his head in his Lord's bosom, he is not anxious to judge, but far otherwise. His brethren keep asking, "Lord, is it I?" Peter makes signs to him. Fishermen have ways of their own of talking to one another. Peter seems to say, without the use of words, "Pray ask the Master." John does not presume to make a guess as to the traitor's name, but he softly says, "Lord, who is it?" He asked that question of his Lord; but he did not himself pitch upon Judas. No, he might, perhaps, have laid his suspicions upon someone else who would have been innocent. It was wise to refer the matter to the Lord. Some say that they live very near to Jesus. It is an evil sign when men speak of their own attainments. These are the people who, in the next breath, begin to condemn others. But this is not after the manner of the beloved John. Some professors affirm that they are going to have a particularly fine place in the glory, all by themselves. I do not quite understand their theory, but I am sure I do not grudge any of my Master's servants any special honour they may desire. As far as I understand them, there is to be a separate place in the kingdom for them, and we poor, ordinary Christians are to be saved; but we must take a lower room. So let it be. We will rejoice in the promotion of our brethren. As for myself, if it should ever come to pass that I should have the privilege of living in some first avenue in heaven among the aristocracy of the skies, I think I should prefer another quarter. I have kept company on earth with such a poor lot of brethren, and I have learned to love them so well, that I would rather abide with them in their inferior heaven than rise with the cream of the cream into the upper places. I like to be with God's people of the poorer class, and of the more struggling and afflicted sort. I like to be with God's people who wrestle hard with sins, and doubts, and fears. If I get spoken to by my very superior brethren, I find that I have very little pleasant fellowship with them, for I know nothing about their wonderful experience of freedom from conflict, and complete deliverance from every evil tendency. I have never won an inch of the way to heaven without fighting for it. I have never lived a day but I have had to sorrow over my imperfections. I sometimes get near to God, but at that time I weep most about my faults and failings. Although I have thus spoken after the manner of men, I do not believe in these superior

beings, nor in their superior heaven: but even if I did, I would sooner follow with the flock than run ahead with the greyhounds. These brethren judge us, and condemn us. They say that we do not understand "the mystery of the kingdom," or something or other. We know Jesus Christ, however—both theirs and ours. We will not deny their piety and grace, but bless God that they have so much of them. We hope, however, to get to heaven the same as they, and into the glory the same as they; and we will be glad if so the Lord will enable us. Do you find the spirit of self-exaltation, and of condemning others, coming over you at times? Conquer it at once by the Holy Spirit's power. Let us cease to judge where we are forbidden to do so. Let us contend earnestly for the truth; but as to the hearts of men, let us leave these to Jesus.

I close by saying—you remember what Jesus said to Peter. Peter was always a little too fast, and he therefore ventured to peer into things which did not concern him, and so he said to Jesus, as he looked at John, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" He did not think badly of brother John: I should have been ashamed of Peter if he had done so. But still he said, "What shall this man do?" Our blessed Lord replied to him, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." So, when you feel inclined, because you are growing in grace and becoming somebody, to say, "Lord, and what shall this poor member do? And what shall this imperfect brother be? What shall that poor, blundering new convert do?"—remember the words of Jesus: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." Mind your Master, and mind yourself, and let your brethren stand or fall to their own Lord, as you must. Now, come and lay your head in your Lord's bosom, and never mind Peter. May God bless you, for Christ's sake!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xiii. 1—35.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—778, 766, 784.

Westwood, November 13, 1888.

BELOVED FRIENDS,—After a great fight of afflictions, I have had sufficient rest from pain to enjoy the revision of this sermon, concerning which I will only say, that it was sweet in the studying, sweet in the preaching, and sweet in the preparation for the press—sweet, I mean, to my own heart. May it be as refreshing to every reader!

May I beg the personal favour of the prayers of my brethren? I am very weak. If the Lord will, I would like to journey to my place of rest: but pray rather that God may be glorified in my sickness, and it will suffice me.

Your suffering brother,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CONCERNING PRAYER.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 25TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

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"Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me."—Psalm lxxxvi. 6, 7.

WHEN I was reading this eighty-sixth Psalm, I reminded you that the title of it is "A prayer of David." It is rightly named "*A prayer*," for it is very especially filled with supplication. There are four other psalms each called by the name *Tephillah*, or "prayer," but this deserves to be distinguished from the rest and known as "the prayer *of David*," even as the ninetieth Psalm is known as "the prayer of Moses." It savours of David. The man of sincerity, of ardour, of trials, of faults, and of great heart, pleads, sobs, and trusts through all the verses of this psalm.

Note one thing about this remarkable prayer of David—it is almost entirely devoid of poetry. Men use grand, studied, rapturous, and poetical expressions in their praises; and they do well. Let God be praised with the noblest thoughts, as well as the most charming music. But when a man comes to prayer, and that prayer is out of the depths of sorrow, he has no time or thought for poetry. He goes straight at the matter in hand, and pleads with God in downright plainness of speech. You shall notice that in happy prayers, in times of joy, men use similes, and metaphors, and tropes, and symbols, and the like; but when it comes to wrestling with God in times of agony, there is no beauty of speech: parable and poesy are laid aside. The man's language is in sackcloth and ashes; or, better still, it stands stripped for wrestling, every superfluous word being laid aside. Then the cry is heard, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." That is not poetry, but it is a great deal better. Throughout this psalm David is a plain-dealer, speaking with God in downright earnest. He has got his grip of the covenant angel, and he will not let him go. Men cannot study where to put their feet prettily when they are wrestling:

they have to do the best they can to hold their ground, and fling their antagonist. In such a prayer-psalm as this, there is no studying of language: it is the pouring out of the heart as the heart boils over, the utterance of the desires as they bubble up from the soul's deeps, with an entire carelessness as to the fashion of the expression.

This ought to be a hint to you when you pray. Do not study how to arrange your words when you come before the Lord. Leave the expression to the occasion: it shall be given you in the selfsame hour what you shall speak. When your heart is like a boiling geyser, let it steam aloft in pillars of prayer. The overflowing of the soul is the best praying in the world. Prayers that are indistinct, inharmonious, broken, made up of sighs and cries, and damped with tears —these are the prayers which win with heaven. Prayers that you cannot pray, pleadings too big for utterance, prayers that stagger the words, and break their backs, and crush them down—these are the very best prayers that God ever hears.

So, you say, dear friends, that you cannot pray; you are so troubled that you cannot speak. Well, then, copy the beggars in the street. They must not beg, for that is contrary to law. But a man sits down, and writes on a spade, "I am starving," and he looks as white as a sheet. What a picture of misery! He is not begging; not he; but the money comes dropping into the old hat. So, when you cannot pray, I believe that your silent display of utter inability is the best sort of praying. The blessing comes when we sit down before the Lord, and in sheer desperation expose our spiritual need.

I am not going to dwell longer upon that matter, but will simply show you what was the nature of David's prayer. There are two things which David must have when he prays—two great things after which he strains with his whole heart. The first is *personal intercourse with God.* Read that sixth verse: "Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications." And, in the second place, he must have *personal answers from God.* He is not content to pray without prayer having some practical result. So, the seventh verse is, "In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me."

I. First, then, David in his prayer sought, beyond all things, to have PERSONAL INTERCOURSE WITH GOD. To my mind that is just the distinction between prayer before conversion, and prayer after it. I often bring that out when I am seeing enquirers who have been religiously brought up. This is the sort of dialogue we hold: "You used to pray, did you?" "Yes, sir; I could not have gone to sleep if I had not said my prayers." "Was there any difference between that kind of praying and what you now practise?" The reply usually is, "Well, sir, I do not now call the first praying at all. I used to say some good words that I had been taught, but I did not say them *to anybody;* now I speak to God, and I have the feeling that he is hearing what I say, and that he is present with me in my room." It is the realization of that second person as really present, the consciousness of the divine presence, which makes prayer real. What can be the good of going through a form of prayer? Can there be any charm in a set of sentences? If you are not speaking to God, what

are you doing? I should say that a prayer would do as much good repeated backwards as forwards, if it is not spoken to God. We have heard of instances of grown up persons keeping on saying the prayer which their mother taught them, and asking that God would bless their father and mother, after they had been dead twenty years. All sorts of absurdities, I do not doubt, have come from the long-continued and thoughtless repetition of mere words. I am not now speaking against the use of a form of prayer, if you feel that you can pray with it; but the point is, that you must be speaking *to God*, and you must have personal intercourse with the invisible One, or else there is nothing whatever in your prayer, whether it be composed on the spot, or repeated from memory.

Note well, that David, while he thus sought to have dealings with God, to come to close grips with the Lord in the act of prayer, was not presumptuously bold. *He perceives the condescension of such fellowship on God's part.* This may be seen in the psalm. If you have the psalm open before you, kindly begin with the first line: "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me." As if he said, "Thou art so high that, unless thou shalt stoop, and stoop very low, thou canst not commune with me. But, Lord, do thus stoop. Bow down thine ear. From thy lofty throne, higher than an angel's wing can reach, stoop thou down and listen to me—poor, feeble me." This is what we must have in order to true prayer. Our prayer must climb to that great ear which hears the symphonies of the perfected, and the hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. Is there not something very wonderful about this, that we, who are both insignificant and unworthy, should be able to speak to him who made the stars, and upholds all things by the word of his power? Yet this is the essence of prayer: to rise, in human feebleness to talk with divine omnipotence; in nothingness to deal with all-sufficiency. You cannot venture upon this without the Mediator, Christ; but with the Mediator, what a wonderful fellowship a worm of the dust is permitted to enjoy with the infinite God! What condescension there is in a sinner communing with the thrice-holy Jehovah! Seek after this intercourse; nothing can excel it.

As you further read in this psalm, you will notice that David, in order to obtain this high privilege, *pleads his need of it.* He cries, "I am poor and needy": as much as to say, "Lord, do come to me, do let me have personal intercourse with thee, for nothing else will serve my turn. I am so poor that thou alone canst enrich me; I am so feeble, that thou alone canst sustain me. Thou hast made me: Lord, forsake not the work of thine own hands! I, thy child, am full of wants, which thou only canst supply. Oh, deal with me in great compassion!" Virtually his plea is,

> "Do not turn away thy face,
> Mine's an urgent, pressing case."

Now, is not this very encouraging, that your claim upon God should lie in your need? You cannot say to God, "Lord, look at me, and commune with me, for I am somebody"; but you may say, "Lord, commune with me, for I am nobody." You may not cry, "Lord, help me, for I can do much"; but you may cry, "Lord help me, for I

can do nothing." Your need is your most prevalent plea with God. When you are desiring to pray such a prayer as consists in intercourse with God, it is great condescension on his part to draw near to you; but he will condescend to your needs, and come near, because your misery needs his presence. God will not condescend to your pride, but he will bow his ear to your grief. If you set up a claim to merit, he will turn his back upon you; but if you come to him with a claim of necessity, which is merely a beggar's claim when he asks for alms —an appeal to the charity of God's sovereign love, then he will turn about and hear your prayer. Come, my heart, art thou not encouraged to come near to God, seeing he hath respect to thy low estate, and pitieth thy sorrows?

Read on, and you will find that David, in order to come into intercourse with God, next *pleads his personal consecration:* "Preserve my soul; for I am holy." By this I understand him to mean, that he belongs to God; that he is consecrated and dedicated to the divine service. Should not the priest handle the golden bowl? Should not the priest enter into the holy place? And should not God therefore come and deal with the man who is dedicated to his use, and set apart to his service? My dear brothers and sisters, can you say to-night that you live for God? Do you recognize that you are not your own, but bought with a price? Well, there dwells an argument in that fact—a reason why the Lord God should come and take hold of you, and link himself with you. You are the vessels of his sanctuary, you are the instruments of his divine service, you are consecrated to his honour, and you may expect him therefore to touch you with his hand, to employ you in his work, and to identify himself with you in your circumstances and necessities.

Moreover, David, anxious to use every argument, *pleads his trust:* "Save thy servant that trusteth in thee." This is a conquering plea: "Lord, my sole reliance is on thee; come to me, then, and justify the confidence which thou thyself hast inspired." "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" but when God has given us faith, then we may be quite sure that we do please him; and if we please him, then, like Enoch, who pleased him, we shall walk with him. You may expect, in prayer, to find God drawing near to you, if in very deed you are holding to him as the one ground of your confidence. Brethren, are you sure that you do trust in God? You answer, "Yes." Ah! then let me say to you, that you shall have a reward, and that reward will probably be that you will be taught to trust him more. That you may rise to a larger faith you will probably suffer greater troubles than you have hitherto known. The reward of service is more service. A good soldier, who has fought through many battles, and won many victories, shall be sent out to the wars next time his master's forces want a captain. You, having already trusted, shall have your faith further tried, in order that you may glorify God, and so arrive at a greater faith. Do you not see that faith largely lies in the realization that God is, and that God is near? And if you so realize God when you bow the knee in prayer, you may expect to have sweet intercourse with him. Many years ago I trusted God about many things, and I found him true; but of late I have

had to take a step in advance, and trust God wholly and alone, in the teeth of all appearances. I have been called almost literally to stand alone in contending against error; and in this I have distinctly taken a nearer place in prayer with the God whom I serve in my spirit. It is very well to rest on God when you have other props, but it is best of all to rest on him when every prop is knocked away. To hang on the bare arm of God is glorious dependence; and he that has once done it, cannot think of ever going back to trust in men again. "No," says he, "I tried you once, and you failed me. I had you with me, and I trusted God in you; but now that you have turned from me, I will trust God alone without you, even though you now come back to the man you deserted." Dependence upon the Lord creates a glorious independence of man. Verily, it is true, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm"; but verily, verily, it is true, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Part of that blessedness will be found in the communion which such a man enjoys with God whenever he approaches him in prayer.

Still, following the same line, notice that David *pleads for God's presence because he is God's servant.* He says here, "Save thy servant." A servant has liberty to enquire as to his master's will, and he is justified in asking to see his Lord. If he is employed upon his master's business, he says, "I want orders. I wish to tell my master my difficulties, and to seek from him a supply for those necessities which his service will bring upon me." You feel that he has a good and sufficient plea when he urges this request. Even so, if you can honestly feel that you are spending your strength in the Lord's service, you, also, may lawfully expect that, when you draw near to him in prayer, your Master will speak to you as his servant, and he that has sent you will commune with you.

David urges yet another reason why just now he should see God, namely, that *he is always in prayer:* "I cry unto thee daily." The Lord will hear your prayer, my dear hearer, to-night, if you never prayed before: I am quite sure of it. But I am still more sure that, if you have been long in the habit of prayer, it is not possible that the Father of mercies should cease to hear you. Oh, the sweet delights of constancy in prayer! The habit of prayer is charming, but the spirit of prayer is heavenly. Be always praying. Is that possible? Some have realized it, till the whole of the engagements of the day have been ablaze with prayer. God bring us each one into that condition! Then we need not barely hope that he will have intercourse with us, for we shall be already enjoying his presence and his fellowship. Blessed are we when prayer surrounds us like an atmosphere. Then we are living in the presence of God; we are continually conversing with him. May such be our lot! May we climb to the top of the mount of communion, and may we never come down from it!

David also tells the Lord that, when he could not attain to the nearness he desired, *yet he struggled after it, and strained after it.* Is not this the meaning of the expression, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul"? As much as if he said, "Lord, when I cannot climb the hill of fellowship, I labour to do so. If I cannot enter into thy presence, I groan until I do so."

We ought either to be rejoicing in the Lord, or pining after him! Ask God to make you miserable, unless his conscious presence makes you happy. Unless his love is shed abroad in your heart, to be the beginning of heaven, may you mourn his absence as a very hell to your soul! Often I pray—

> "Oh, make my heart rejoice, or ache;
> Resolve each doubt for me:
> Lord, if it be not broken, break;
> And heal it if it be."

We want one of the two—either to commune with God, or else to sigh and cry till we do so. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness if we are not filled. To be in a state of content without fellowship with God would be a terrible condition indeed.

Now, when a man's daily cries and inward strivings are after God, he may certainly expect that God in prayer will have intercourse with him. But again, I say, does it not seem extraordinary that you and I, insignificant persons, who can have no claim upon the great Maker of the universe, should yet be permitted to come to his courts—ay, even to come to himself through Christ Jesus, and speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend? Do not think that Abraham, when he stood before the Lord, and pleaded with him, as one man does with another, was singularly favoured above the rest of the elect family. It was a high favour, I cannot tell you how great; but such honour have all the saints. There are occasions with all his people when the Lord brings them very near, and speaks with them, and they with him, when his presence is to them as real as the all-pervading air, and they are as much rejoiced in it as in the presence of father, or wife, or child, or friend.

Still David, conscious of the great privilege which he sought, was not content without pleading the master argument of all: *he pleads the great goodness of the Lord.* Read it in verse five: "For thou, Lord, art good." As much as to say—If thou wert not good thou wouldst never listen to me. I am, as it were, a noxious insect which a man might far sooner crush than speak with; and yet thou art so good, my God, that instead of setting thy foot on me, thou dost lift me up and talk with me. Who thinks of an angel talking with an emmet? That would be nothing; here is Jehovah speaking with a creature which is crushed before the moth. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." He lets an unworthy creature tell out its heart to him, and he bows his ear, and listens as earnestly as if there were no other voice in heaven to command his thought. He gives his whole attention to the feeble cry of an unworthy one. Such an amazing fact could not happen unless it were written, "For thou, Lord, art good."

Ah! but besides that, there is sin in us. I can understand the great God forgetting our littleness, and bowing down to it; but for the holy God not to be held off by our sinfulness, this is a greater wonder still. But then the verse says he is "ready to forgive." Ah, yes! when some of us think of what we were, we must be drowned in amazement that ever we should be permitted to commune with God.

Yonder is a man who could once swear at an awful rate, and now God listens to his voice in prayer. Another was a Sabbath-breaker, a neglecter of the Word of God, a despiser of every holy and pure thing, and yet he is now permitted to come into intimate friendship with the Most High. It is very marvellous, is it not?

Remember, none ever washed Christ's feet except a woman that was a sinner. Our Lord selects those that have been the greatest sinners to come into the nearest communion with himself. It may be he has raised up some sister here, who was once a tempter of others, to become a mighty intercessor in prayer for the salvation of others. It may be that some brother here, who once was—ah! but he is ashamed to remember what he was—has now become mighty in supplication; and, like Elijah, can open or shut the windows of heaven. Oh, the strangeness of Almighty grace! Let God's name be magnified for ever and ever.

Thus I have enlarged on the first thought that, in prayer, it is vital to us really to speak with God. Before I leave it, I want to pass a question round the place. Do you, my dear hearers, all pray so as to speak with God? If not, what does it mean? If you merely repeat good words, what is the use of it? You might as well stand on a hill and talk to the moon, as kneel down and hurry through the Lord's Prayer, and then think that you have prayed. I tell you, you might better do the first than the second, for you would not insult God in that case; whereas you do insult him in every one of those holy words which you use without thought, heart, and faith. Think how you would like your own child every morning to come to you, and repeat a certain set of words without meaning anything thereby. You would say, "There, child, there, I have heard that often enough. Come to me no more with your empty noise." You would not care for vain repetitions. But when your boy or girl says, "Father, I need such a thing, please give it me," you hearken to the child's words. It may be that you have not enough of this world's goods to be very anxious that your children should come with large petitions; but if you were sufficiently rich, you would say, "That is right, dear child. Is there anything else you want? Tell me what it is. I will right gladly give you all things that are needful for you." You would wish your child's request to be an intelligent one, and then you would gladly attend to it. If your prayer does not come from your heart it will not go to God's heart; and if it does not bring you near to God, so that you are speaking to him, you have simply wasted your breath. You have done worse than nothing, for in all likelihood you have daubed your conscience over with the notion that you have prayed, and so you have even done yourself serious harm by a flattering deceit. Oh, that God would save you from being so foolish!

II. And now I come to the second point, and I pray God to give me strength to speak upon it, and give you grace to hear it. Not at any great length, but with much earnestness, I have to remind you that David, in his prayer, desired PERSONAL ANSWERS FROM GOD. When we pray, we expect God to hear us, even as David says, "In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me."

I must not speak for all Christians in this matter; but I may speak

for myself and for many dear brethren in the faith, and I must boldly say that we expect the Lord to hear our prayers; nay, we are sure that he does so. We hear our fellow-Christians say, when we tell them of instances in which God has heard our prayers, "How very extraordinary!" And we look at them, and say, "Extraordinary!" Has it become an extraordinary thing for God to be true to his own promise? I like better the remark of the good old lady, who, when her prayer was answered, was asked, "Does it not surprise you?" She said, "No, it does not surprise me; it is just like him." If any one of you had a promise from a friend that, upon your sending in a note, he would give you such and such a thing; if you sent the request, and he fulfilled his promise, would you say, "I am greatly surprised at his action"? No, no: you believe that your friend means what he says, and you look for him to keep his word. O child of God, deal with God on those terms. The wonder was, that he should make the promise at all; but when he has made the promise, it is not wonderful that he should keep it. He expects you to ask, and he waits to give.

A promise is like a cheque. If I have a cheque, what do I do with it? Suppose I carried it about in my pocket, and said, "I do not see the use of this bit of paper, I cannot buy anything with it," a person would say, "Have you been to the bank with it?" "No, I did not think of that." "But it is payable to your order. Have you written your name on the back of it?" "No, I have not done that." "And yet you are blaming the person who gave you the cheque? The whole blame lies with yourself. Put your name at the back of the cheque, go with it to the bank, and you will get what is promised to you." A prayer should be the presentation of God's promise endorsed by your personal faith. I hear of people praying for an hour together. I am very pleased that they can; but it is seldom that I can do so, and I see no need for it. It is like a person going into a bank with a cheque, and stopping an hour. The clerks would wonder. The common-sense way is to go to the counter and show your cheque, and take your money, and go about your business. There is a style of prayer which is of this fine practical character. You so believe in God that you present the promise, obtain the blessing, and go about your Master's business. Sometimes a flood of words only means excusing unbelief. The prayers of the Bible are nearly all short ones: they are short and strong. The exceptions are found in places of peculiar difficulty, like that of Jacob, when he cried,

> "With thee all night I mean to stay,
> And wrestle till the break of day."

As a general rule, faith presents its prayer, gets its answer, and goes on its way rejoicing.

We expect our God to answer our prayer all the more surely when we are in trouble. David so expected: "In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me." Trouble is sent to make us pray. When we pray, the prayer becomes the solace of our trouble; and when the prayer is heard, it becomes the salvation out of our trouble. Many of you would be out of trouble quickly if you prayed. "Sir, I have been doing my best." And what is your

best? A better thing than your best is to wait upon the Lord. Often and often trial has to rap our fingers to make us let go our harmful confidences, and turn to the Lord. With our vain-confidence we are like a madman with a razor: the more we grasp it, the more it cuts us. Drop the deadly self-trust; trust in God, and look to him, and your deliverance will speedily come to you. If you should have no answer at any other time, you will assuredly be heard in the time of trouble if you trust in the Lord.

Now, if we expect God to answer us, we do so on very good grounds. There are certain natural reasons. I was turning over in my mind the question, "Why do I pray? Why have I any reason to believe that God hears me?" And I thought to myself, "Well, on natural grounds I have a right to believe that God will hear prayer, or *otherwise why is prayer commanded?*" The Scripture is full of prayer. It is an institution of the old covenant, as well as of the new, and yet it is a piece of folly if God does not hear it.

"Oh," says somebody, "but it does you good to pray, even though there may be no such a thing as God's hearing prayer." It might do an idiot good to pray when he knew there was no hearing of prayer on God's part; but not being an idiot myself, I could not perform such a stupid exercise. I would as soon sit on a five-barred gate, and whistle to the hills as offer prayer if I did not hope to be heard. If there is no God that hears prayer, I shall not pray, nor will any other rational being. Show prayer to be unheard of God, and you have shown it to be a folly. Show prayer to be a folly, and who will pursue it? Does God invite us to pray? Does he command us to pray? Are there many injunctions of this kind—"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint"; "Pray without ceasing"; and so on? Then prayer must be heard of God. How would it be with you if you said to a number of poor people, "Come round to my gate to-morrow, and I will relieve your distresses"? Would you not intend to relieve their distresses when you said so? I cannot imagine that you would be so diabolical as to keep on saying, "Come to my house. Whenever you are hungry, come to my table. Whenever you need clothes, come to my door, and ask"; all the while saying to yourself, "But I do not intend to give you anything. You may come, and ring the bell as long as you like; it will be fine exercise for you, but I shall take no notice of your appeals." It would be a most shocking and disgraceful mockery of misery. God will not serve us in that fashion. The very institution of prayer gives us the assurance that God intends to hear and to answer.

Observe, again, that *prayer has been universal among all the saints.* There have been saints of different moulds and temperaments, but they have all prayed. Some of them have been, like Heman and Asaph, masters of song, and they have prayed; others could not sing, but they have all prayed. To-day you may meet with all sorts of Christians, holding many kinds of doctrines, but they all pray; and what is most curious, they all pray alike, too. You can scarcely detect a difference when they pray.

"The saints in prayer appear as one,
In word, and deed, and mind."

A man may preach doctrine contrary to the grace of God; but get him on his knees, and he prays to God for grace, as heartily as John Calvin himself. We are one at the mercy-seat. Whatever doctrinal views we may hold, when we plead with the living God, in the power of the Holy Ghost, we are poured into one mould. How is this? If, all the ages through, saints have prayed, have they all been fools? Have they all exercised themselves in a way that was utterly useless and absurd? Do not believe it!

Note again, that *the more godly and holy a man is, the more he prays.* You never heard yet that a man began to backslide, or that a sober man became a drunkard, through praying too much. Did you ever hear of a person becoming unkind to his wife, ungenerous to the poor, negligent of public worship, or guilty of grievous sin, through being too much in prayer? No; the case is the reverse. As the man loves God more, and becomes more like Christ, he takes greater delight in prayer. That cannot be an idle and useless exercise which the best of men have followed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If there be a possibility of error, we err in the best of company: for yonder comes the Lord Jesus himself from his lonely haunt, with the burrs of the heather from the mountain-side sticking to his garments. He has spent all night in agonizing prayer. He will not open his mouth to preach to the multitude till first of all he has received a new anointing from his Father's hand in secret fellowship with heaven. Our Master and his best disciples have abounded in prayer.

Well, dear friends, these are natural reasons; and there are a great many more, if you will think them out.

But, if you turn to Scriptural reasons, why was there a mercy-seat if there is nothing in prayer? Why does the throne of grace still remain as a permanent institution, of which Paul says, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace," unless there is a reality in it? Tell me, why is Christ the way to the mercy-seat? Why is he himself the great Intercessor and Mediator, if there is nothing in prayer? The Holy Ghost helpeth our infirmities in prayer; surely there must be something effectual where he lends his aid. What! is he, after all, helping us to do a thing which produces no result?—helping us to present petitions which will never reach the ear of God? Tell that to the philosophers; we are not so credulous.

For, once more, we know that God hears prayer, because *we have met with multitudes of his people who can tell of answers to prayer.* What is more, we are ourselves among that number. Looking back on my diary, I find it studded with answers to prayer. Often when I have talked with friends of an evening, telling them a few cases in which God has heard my cries in time of need, they have said, "Have you written these down?" "Well, no, I cannot say that I have." "Oh," says one, "pray do not let such facts be lost." I have to reply that many cases of answered prayer are quite beyond the belief of average people. I know them to be true, but I do not expect others to believe my tale. When William Huntington wrote his "Bank of Faith," some people called it a "Bank of Nonsense." I could write twenty "Banks of Faith," and every word should be as sure as an honest man could write; but the only result would be, that

people would say, "Oh, well, you know, that is the result of the good man's fanaticism." The moment that the moderns do not like to believe a thing, they call it fanatical. If we were put into a witness-box to-morrow, our testimony would have weight with the court; but yet, the moment we talk about God's hearing prayer, oh, then we are romancing, and our witness is not to be received. But, brothers and sisters, we bear a true witness, whether men receive it or not. I solemnly declare that no fact is better proved by my experience than this, that the Lord hears the prayers of his believing people. You, each one, will know for himself, or herself, whether there is a God that hears prayer. Does he answer your petitions? Brethren, you are sure that he does, and at the asking of the question you bow your heads and say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." My dear brother, William Olney, sits here among us: have we not prayed him twice back from the gates of the grave? He lives as an instance of answered prayer. There is not a stone or a beam about this great Tabernacle but has been an answer to our prayers. In days when, as a congregation, we were few and feeble, we ventured on the serious enterprise of building this great house, and we prayed it up stone by stone, to the praise and glory of God. If we who worship beneath this dome did not believe in prayer, the stones out of the wall would cry out against us.

But I hear a voice saying, "There are so many difficulties about prayer being heard." Are there? The farther I go in this life, the more difficulties I am informed of, though I should not have discovered them myself. I am assured that there are great difficulties about eating, breathing, and sleeping. As to the very air, I do not know what it is not full of: it teems with the seeds of disease, and the wonder is that we live at all. But we do live, do we not? and we shall eat our suppers to-night despite the difficulties in connection with food. As to the difficulties connected with prayer, they are altogether philosophical difficulties, and by no means practical ones. If you are philosophers, you may weary your heads about them; but if you are simple, practical people, you may pray, and receive the blessing.

"Ay, but the power of prayer with God supposes that God may change." Well, our doing anything supposes *that*, but it is a mere supposition. Your even walking home to-night might raise a difficulty as to the decrees of God; but it is a non-existent difficulty. After you have entertained it as long as you like, you will find that you have entertained a shadow. Suppose that you leave off supposing, and just do as God tells you, and see whether it does not work. When you find that it does practically work, let other people enjoy the difficulties. I do not eat meat; but if I did, I should always feel quite satisfied to let my dogs have the bones: the meat would satisfy me. If there are any difficulties about prayer, the dogs may have them—I mean the philosophers; but as for us, simple Christian people, we are satisfied with the meat of the precious fact that prayer brings every blessing from above. We pray, and God hears us, and that is enough for us. Our God does not change his will, and yet he wills a change in answer to prayer.

I have done when I have made this further remark. I cannot

expect any man to believe that he can commune with God, or that God will in very deed hear his prayer, and grant him his desire, unless he has been led personally to try it. But if, by the Spirit of God, he has been led to seek after God, and to draw near to God, I shall have no need of further arguments with him. That man has now entered upon a new life, in which he will be capable of understanding new things. Until he does enter upon that life, he is spiritually deaf, and blind; and what can he know about spiritual realities? Our Lord has said to us, "Ye must be born again." When we are born again, then the life within turns toward the life of God, and has fellowship with God, and God answers to it, and the desire of the godly one is granted. Oh! the honour of communion with God! Happy beings who enjoy it! How unspeakable the privilege of pouring out your hearts before God! Delight yourselves therein before you fall asleep this night. Oh, the holy quietude which it brings! You have not an ounce of care to carry, because all your burden is, in prayer and supplication, laid on him that careth for you! Oh, the love that dwells in the heart of the man who draws near to God in prayer! You cannot love God at a distance. You must draw nearer, and nearer, or love will not rest. As when one comes into the sunshine, he feels the warmth, so when we come nearer to God we have more joy in him. Keep near to God; abound in prayer; let your supplications be instant and constant; and you will be sure that the Father himself hears your cries!

Oh, that some here who never prayed would begin at once! Trust in Jesus, the Intercessor, and let that trust show itself by pleading the merit of his blood in earnest prayer. Oh, that you would now begin that holy life of prayer which shall lead up to the eternal life of praise at the right hand of God. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxxvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—34 (Version I.), 37 (Song II.), 40.

On the wing, November 19th, 1888.

DEAR FRIENDS,—After reading this sermon carefully, I add these words. In all my sickness, weakness, conflict, and pain, the prayer-hearing God has been with me, and not one word of his promise has failed. Blessed be his name! And now I am sufficiently recovered to begin my journey to the place where I take rest and change, I go beneath a canopy of prayers. Will the reader join in asking that for the sake of my work I may soon recover strength, and return to my field of service? I have more confidence in prayer than in the balmy air and the rest; means are only good when the God of the means makes them so. I leave my heart with dear ones at home, and with my congregation of hearers and readers. The Lord be with you!

Yours heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JUDGMENTS AND NO REPENTANCE: REPENTANCE AND NO SALVATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, August 25, 1887.

"They repented not to give him glory."—Revelation xvi. 9.

In reading this chapter, dear friends—this very terrible chapter—you must have been struck, I think, with the forces of God. *How great are the armies of the Lord of hosts!* As the mighty Jehovah smote Pharaoh with overwhelming plagues, so doth the Lord in this awful portion of the Apocalypse deal with the ungodly. Seven angels stood forth, each one with his vial full of the wrath of God, to be poured out upon the earth. Seven executioners were needed, and seven were present: a perfect number for the accomplishment of the divine purpose. Behold, the angels of God are innumerable! "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." Our Lord Jesus Christ, even in his humiliation, said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" The shining ones march in great armies, and God accomplishes many of his purposes by them, without our observing it. Are not their great doings all written in the book of the wars of the Lord, which as yet no man hath read? If there were no other powers at his disposal, Jehovah, as the Lord of all angels, would still be fitly called the Lord of hosts.

What power resides in these mysterious beings! With what energy does the Lord clothe them! They are made to fly swiftly on the errands of his wisdom. "He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." Here we find one of these angels pouring his bowl upon the earth, and causing a noisome and grievous sore upon men. Another empties his vial on the sea, and it becomes as the blood of a dead man. A third angel pours out his bowl upon the rivers, and the fountains of waters are ensanguined. Here one ventures to pour his bowl upon the golden sun, that orb which is of this great world both eye and soul, and the sun, as though its flame were re-fed with the most brilliant oil, burns with greater fury than ever; and we read,

"Men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues." What power, then, hath God to accomplish his purposes, when a single angel can do as much as this; and the Lord hath myriads of them, waiting to do his bidding.

Note yet again, *how all men are within the reach of the divine judgments.* They proudly fancy that they can escape from God. Many a little Pharaoh says, in the hardness of his heart, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Boastful worldlings dream that they, at any rate, are beyond punishment; for their careful forethought will secure them against the calamities which others bring upon themselves. They are ungodly, but still they take good care of themselves, and keep clear of vice and prodigality. They are far too prudent to involve themselves in the perils of the gamester or the profligate. They prefer safer sins, and so they fancy that they are out of harm's reach, though they do not acknowledge God. Poverty cannot reach them, for they have filled their houses with hid treasure; sickness cannot hurt them, for they have a vigorous constitution. They defy dangers which have thrown down others. They boast themselves in the glory of their strength, and in the hardness of their hearts. These are the men who sit aloft, beyond the reach of the arrows of Jehovah. What folly! No man is at any moment beyond the reach of vengeance. The Lord has but to remember the callous and secure, and straightway the joints of their loins shall be loosed, and fearfulness shall take hold upon them: their proud hearts can fail them in a moment, even though no outward sorrow afflict them. In providence the detectives of God never fail to find out the guilty. This angel, you perceive, poured his vial on the sun, and by way of the sun, with his scorching heat, the proudest sons of men were visited. The noble and the great, the rich and the healthy, could not bear the increased solar heat, for the day burned as an oven. We know not by how many doors God can come at the guilty, but come at them he will when once his arm is bared for war. When he saith, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries," who shall withstand him? This land is exceedingly haughty, and some of its inhabitants talk as if they were demigods. Our insular pride makes us fancy that we shall prosper, come what may; but it is not so: we are great debtors to divine favour, and if we cease to acknowledge the Lord's hand in our prosperity he may teach us humility by sharp methods. God's right hand can find out his adversaries; and he will punish sin in Britain as surely as he punished sin in Rome, or in Nineveh. If Jerusalem did not escape, shall London last for ever? No country, no city, and no man, however rich, or strong, or great, can climb beyond the reach of the divine hand. In the height or in the depth God is equally present in power: in this state or in the next he is equally able to dispense justice. No ivory throne can lift a monarch above Jehovah's rod; no pillar of fame can place a mortal beyond his sword. Oh that all of you would have the sense to see this! and as you cannot fly *from* God, fly *to* him. As you cannot resist the power of his justice, flee to the power of his mercy. When he stretches out his arms and invites you to come, turn not your backs. Come, like the prodigal, saying, "Father, I have sinned"; and he

will graciously receive you. This terrible chapter takes away all hope from men as to their escaping from God when once he girds himself with vengeance, and sits down upon his throne of justice, to execute punishment. Then shall his right hand find out his enemies, and overturn them with swift destruction.

One truth, however, comes out of this passage more plainly than any other, to my mind; and that is, that *judgments, even the most terrible of them, do not in themselves produce a satisfactory repentance in the minds of men.* Let me read you two or three verses, and you will see how clearly this is the case. The punishment drove men into still more furious rebellion; in none did it subdue and sanctify them. "And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." The twenty-first verse is to the same effect:—"And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail." The terrors of the Lord produced blasphemy, but they did not produce repentance.

I. In considering this subject, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I would begin by saying that JUDGMENTS, APART FROM DIVINE GRACE, MAY PRODUCE A KIND OF REPENTANCE. It is repentance after a fashion, but it is not of that holy, healthy, heavenly sort which is wrought in the renewed heart by the Holy Ghost.

Judgment may produce a carnal repentance—a repentance that is of the flesh, and after the manner of the sinful nature of men. In this repentance the depravity of the heart remains the same in essence, though it takes another form of showing itself. Though the man changes, he is not savingly changed: he becomes another man, but not a new man. The same sin rules in him, but it is called by another name, and wears another dress. The stone is carved into a more sightly shape, but it is not turned into flesh. The iron is cast into another image, but it is not transformed into gold. This carnal repentance is caused by fear. Does not every thief repent of robbery when he is convicted and sent to jail? Does not every murderer repent of his crime when he stands under the fatal tree? This is the kind of repentance which the terrors of the Lord will work in men's minds unless they are altogether hardened and under the special dominion of the devil. Travellers in great storms will tremble, and, trembling, will confess their guilt, and begin to pray; but when the tempest is over, their trembling, their confession, and their praying are all over. They shake because of their sins, but they are not shaken out of their sins. Mariners far out at sea, when the labouring barque threatens to go down to the bottom, will repent; but such repentance is only a few qualms of conscience, because they are in dread of death, and judgment, and hell. So men that lie upon a bed of sickness, when their bones ache, and their hearts melt, and the grave yawns beneath their couch, will often repent; and yet, if they could be raised

up, they would return to their sins as the dog returns to his vomit. This is wretched work. This repentance gives no glory to God, and leads to no saving and lasting deliverance from sin. It is fallen nature washed, and brushed, and rouged; but allowed to remain fallen nature still. The heart is not renewed, the life is not regenerated, the mind is not changed; and, therefore, little is done that is worth the doing. The leopard is caged, but there are the spots; the Ethiopian is scrubbed, but his skin is as black as ever. This repentance is the outcome of nature under terror, and not the fruit of divine grace. The thunders, and the storms, and the hail, and the noisome sores can produce in men nothing more than a fleshly repentance; and flesh repenting is still flesh, and tends to corruption.

And hence, again, it is but *a transient repentance.* They repent but for a season. While they see the immediate evil of their sin in its results, they cry out as if they really hated sin; but their hatred is only a little tiff, which lasts for a while, and then they make friends with their sins, as Pilate made friends with Herod. Their goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew it passes away. Even Ahab once repented; but, oh, what a poor and short-lived repentance it was! We find men turning away from their sin for a time, but then going back to it with a greater gusto, as men may abstain from food for some hours, in order to increase their appetite for the banquet which is preparing. Beware of that repentance which is nothing better than the vomit of a dog: how can it be acceptable with God? Beware of that repentance which comes of yourself, for it comes of the flesh; and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and nothing better. That which is of the flesh is a mere flash; no sooner has it come than it is gone. "All flesh is grass," and the flower of it soon withers away. When the Spirit of the Lord blows upon the fairest flower of our poor nature it straightway withers up; how could it be otherwise with grass? It is well that it should be withered up by the Spirit of God; for, left to itself, it will wither in a worse style, and our destruction will be sure. "The word of the Lord abideth for ever," but all the comeliness of man passes away. Beware, then, of a repentance which springs alone from terror—comes up in a night and withers in a night—appears and promises, but promises only to delude.

Such a repentance is superficial. It only affects the surface of the man. It does not go to the heart, it is hardly more than skin deep. How often have we been greatly grieved when we have seen persons in poverty, or in sickness, or in some great fright, or under some other form of excitement, who have professed repentance, and avowed it very loudly too; but yet you could see that the repentance did not go deep enough to make them give up their sin! Herod was exceedingly sorry that he had made an oath which bound him to give John's head in a charger to the daughter of Herodias; but he was not so sorry as to break loose from his wicked pledge. No. He committed the murder, though he said he was exceedingly sorry for it. How many there are that are hand and glove with the devil, and yet speak against him, so as to keep up a fair show before others! They take the sweetness and the profit of an evil trade, and yet condemn the trade itself. They derive rent from an ill house, but, of

course, they are grieved that people should use their property for such a purpose! Such repentance as that is, to a large extent, sheer hypocrisy. It gives to men a kind of rest of conscience, which rest of conscience is injurious to them, since it lulls them to sleep, and enables them to wake and return to their sin as if nothing had happened. That repentance which is worth having turns a man inside out, and purges the innermost part of the soul, killing the love of sin, so that even if sin could be made profitable and sweet to the man he could not abide it. If sin were buttered and sugared on both sides, the true penitent would not have it; for he has found that there is a deadly poison in its sweetness, and therefore he loathes it, and leaves it. The really repentant one hates sin as sin, and turns from it with purpose of heart. Beware of a superficial repentance, for the Lord abhors it. God is not mocked; he sees the loathsomeness of the ulcer through the film which seeks to hide it.

Once again, the awful terrors of God may produce *a despairing repentance.* This is deep enough, but then it lacks the element of bringing glory to God. It has in it no trace of submission, no touch of faith, no breath of love. There is nothing evangelical about it: it is legal all through, and therefore worthless for salvation. It is a kind of anticipation of the endless judgment and the wrath to come; but it is not a deliverance therefrom. Take Judas as a specimen. "I have sinned," says he. He flings down the accursed gold for which he had sold his Master and his own soul, but he goes out to hang himself. What an awful thing it is when the law of God and the terrors of God work upon the conscience, and arouse all a man's fears, and yet he will not fly to Christ! The man is so overcome with horror at the prospect of the world to come that, like a fool, he rushes upon his fate, even as the moth dashes into the flame of the candle. To escape from death he flies to death. To escape from the wrath of God he puts an end to his last hope of mercy, and rushes into the presence of an angry God uncalled. This is a dreadful repentance, from which I pray God to save you. It works death even in this life, and it works the second death in the world to come. If any of you are under the power of despair at this moment, I pray you, do not rest in it; for it is no more a place to rest in than hell itself. The satisfaction of despair, grim and dreadful thing as it is, has a sort of fascination for some minds, and they begin to be at peace in the midnight of hopelessness. They say there is no hope, and therefore they may as well sin up to the full, and get some sort of enjoyment out of their rebellion. Under this mad impulse they go from bad to worse, and sin more than ever. O my hearer, may God save thee from this, and bring thee to be touched with a sense of the love and of the grace of God, wherein there is hope, lest thou repent hopelessly and unbelievingly, and perish in thy repentance!

II. So you see, my brethren, judgments may produce a certain likeness of repentance: but then, secondly, THEY DO NOT AND THEY CANNOT OF THEMSELVES PRODUCE A REPENTANCE SUCH AS GIVES GOD GLORY. "They repented not to give him glory."

Now, this not giving God glory is a very important omission, and one which vitiates the whole matter. I would dwell upon it for a

minute or two, that you may see how great is the failure. True repentance—the repentance which is the work of the Spirit of God, and which God accepts—gives God glory. Here are scales and balances for you, wherewith you may weigh your repentance before God. Do so with great care and jealousy. True repentance gives God glory; and it glorifies God in many ways, of which I have not time to tell you in full; but I can tell you enough to help you in self-examination. Is yours true repentance or not? That is the question. I believe that true repentance has as pure and sincere a worship in it as the anthems of the glorified above. It is a form of adoration as suitable to sinners as the eternal hallelujahs are suitable for perfect beings.

First, *it reverences and adores God's omniscience.* It is a confession of the fact of God's knowledge, and the truthfulness of his statements, for the man says, "O Lord, I am what thy Word says I am. I am a sinner through and through; and I know while I confess my sin that thou knowest more about my sin than I do. I lay bare my soul, but it never was possible for me to hide it from thy inspection. Thou hast seen my thoughts, and the secret intents of my heart. Before thee have I sinned. In thy sight have I done evil. Thou knowest me altogether, and I adore thine omniscience." Every true penitent is conscious of the divine eye resting upon him; and he in lowliest manner acknowledges the piercing and discerning power of that eye. The real penitent asks that the Lord would reveal to him more and more of his true condition, that he may not cloak his sin, nor deceive himself in any way, but may be honest and upright before God. Such repentance gives glory to the omniscience of God.

Next, *the truly penitent gives glory to the righteousness of God in his law.* The man that really hates sin says, "Lord, I do not quarrel with thy law. Thy law is holy, and just, and good: the fault is with me, for I am carnal, sold under sin. No law could be more exactly right and just than thy law is, and in having transgressed against it I am deeply guilty, and I own my folly and crime. Whatever becomes of me, I dare not impugn the law which condemns me. I adore its infinite majesty and purity." Impenitence rails at the law as too severe, speaks of transgression as a trifle, and of future punishment as cruelty; but the truly repentant soul admires the law, and champions it even against its own self. Do you know all this in your own heart?

Next, the sincerely penitent also *adores and glorifies the justice of God in his punishment of transgression.* I know that when I was under a sense of sin I felt that if God did not punish me he ought to do so. I could not see how God could be the Judge of all the earth if he did not visit my transgressions with infinite wrath. I had no quarrel with the sternest word either of the Old or of the New Testament. I was bound under my sense of guilt to bare my back to its scourges, and to lay my neck upon its block. I said in so many words—

> "And if my soul were sent to hell,
> Thy righteous law approves it well."

This is real penitence, when the man gives glory to the justice of God, even though it condemns him. O my hearer, do you thus repent?

Is sin really sinful to you? Do you see its desert of hell? If not, your repentance needs to be repented of.

And, next, *true repentance glorifies the sovereignty of God in his mercy.* The man who is deeply conscious of his guilt, says, "Lord, I have no claim on thee. I have no rights, but the right to be punished. I have forfeited all claim to favour and reward. If thou wilt freely forgive me, if thou canst justly do so, I will for ever adore thee for so doing; but I cannot say that I have any right thereto. If thou wilt pardon me, it must be thine own act and deed, performed on grounds within thyself. I know that thou hast a sovereign right, as King of kings, to execute the sentence of the law, or to condone my offence, if thou canst do it in consistency with justice. I must leave myself absolutely in thy hands." That man truly, deeply, sincerely repents who perceives that there is justice in the declaration of God, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." How some people bite their lips when they hear these sentences! and yet they are the very voice of Jehovah, the God whom I adore. He claims to be absolute in the realm of grace, doing as he pleases with his own. Let him do as he wills, for his will is holy love. We can trust absolute authority with him who is the infinitely good and just. In the absolute sovereignty of God there is hope for the most guilty of men. We do not fully repent of sin until we feel that it is so, and confess that the Lord has a right to do as he pleases in this matter, whether he justly destroys us or graciously saves us.

Further, I believe that the man has repented to the glory of God *when he spies out that there is a way by which God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly*—when he sees the Lord Jesus Christ, the adorable Son of God, coming in our human nature and becoming the substitute for sinners, and the sacrifice for sin. That is true repentance which washes the Redeemer's feet with her tears, and wipes them with the hairs of her head. Those dear feet had not been pierced when the woman thus washed them; but they have been pierced now. Let us wash the nail-prints with the tears of our repentance at this hour! Dost thou rejoice in Jesus crucified? Dost thou love Christ? Dost thou trust him? Dost thou leap for joy at the very thought that God hath set him forth to be a propitiation for sin? This is repentance after a godly sort. This is repentance that needeth not to be repented of. Repentance makes a rainbow with her tears of grief for sin, and her glances of hope at the love of Christ and his great finished work. Repentance stands at the cross, and sees sin forgiven, and then repents more than she ever did when she could not spy out forgiveness. She says of her sins,

> "I know they are forgiven,
> But now their pain to me
> Is all the grief and anguish
> They laid, my Lord, on thee."

Sin in the anguish of conviction does not so effectually break a heart as sin forgiven. A sense of blood-bought pardon soon dissolves a heart of stone. Hannibal, it is said, dissolved the rocks of the Alps with vinegar; but Christ dissolves our hearts with love. He tells us, "I

have blotted out thy sins. I bore on the tree the ransom for thee. I have poured out my heart's blood that thou mightest live." And then it is that we hate sin with a perfect hatred, and are full of mourning because we pierced the Lord. Because evil is so hateful to the heart of Jesus we loathe it intensely. This is the repentance which glorifies God. The Lord grant such repentance to every one of us!

For, mark you, it glorifies God in one other way—*by setting the sinner ever afterwards craving after holiness.* "The burnt child dreads the fire"; and the sinner dreads sin when he has been delivered from the flame of it by the Lord Jesus. Because Jesus suffered so bitterly, he feels that he himself suffered, and so feels as much dread of sin as if he had himself been made to die through it. The man who knows that his sins have been forgiven, will never be satisfied with any degree of sanctification short of being made like unto him who took his sin away. "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," and to this result we press forward. While that passage relates mainly to our justification, yet the Lord Jesus Christ has also an eye to our sanctification. He hath redeemed us that we may be a people zealous for good works, and may in all things serve him who hath redeemed us, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood. Perfect holiness is our aspiration. Oh that it were our attainment! But the very aspiration gives glory to the thrice holy God, whom we desire to imitate.

Now, beloved friends, the judgments of God in and of themselves can never work evangelical repentance in a single human heart.

> "Law and terrors do but harden,
> All the while they work alone;
> 'Tis a sense of blood-bought pardon
> That dissolves the heart of stone."

You see, then, how a gracious repentance glorifies God: do you know anything of such a repentance? Answer, I pray you, as before the Lord, whom no man can deceive.

III. But now, thirdly, I go a step further—THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, APART FROM DIVINE GRACE, MAY, THROUGH OUR HARDNESS OF HEART, INVOLVE US IN GREATER SIN.

Listen to me, any of you that have been much tried and afflicted, and yet have never come to Jesus. I tell you, if God has chastened you very much, until he is saying to-night, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" then all this chastening which you have despised *involves you in deeper sin*, because you now sin with a clearer knowledge of what sin really is. A young man came to London, and he fell into vice. He has had to suffer very grievously for it, and if he has not heartily repented—if he goes back again to his folly—there will be sevenfold damnation about his evil way in future. Let him remember this. He cannot sin cheaply now. He knows what he is at, and his offence will be distinctly wilful, and therefore rankly offensive. You scarcely knew that it was fire at first, but you know now: if you go and put your finger into the fire again you deserve to be burned.

A man that has suffered divine judgment, and yet goes back to sin, increases his guilt, because there is the element of *defiance* in his obstinacy. He has come to be like Pharaoh, who stoutly resisted Jehovah and his commands. Let the Lord send his plagues: Pharaoh will brazen it out with him. O dear friend, I hope that you have not yet reached such a fearful state of mind. I hope you are not bent on war with the Almighty! I trust you will not dash upon the bosses of his buckler. Do not say, "Sickness may follow sickness, but I shall not yield. Loss may follow loss, but I will not turn from my ways. I am of too tough metal to care for such things." If so, you have deliberately thrown down the gage of battle to the Lord of all the earth. Think of the conflict: do no more. Shall the tow contend with the fire? Yet such is thine ignorant pride in thus defying God. This must be the case when judgments do not bring repentance, for they introduce the element of defiance into the man's impenitent perseverance in evil, and so make him doubly guilty.

Moreover, to many lives judgments also introduce the element of *falsehood*. The man vowed that if he recovered from sickness he would fear God. He was sick, and a saint he would be. But when he got well, ah! how much of a saint was he? You know the old proverb. I need not quote it further. Yes, many have lied unto God. Hear it. They have not lied unto men, but lied unto God in this matter, till now their life is a continued provoking of God by broken promises and disregarded covenants. Ah me! This blackens a life. What! Has your whole life become an elaborate lie? Are you every moment acting falsely? Are you every hour violating vows and promises made to your God? O man, what will become of you when the God of Ananias and Sapphira comes to deal with you?

I do fear that there are some whose conduct has in it the element of *deliberate hatred of God;* for these have had time now to see which way evil goes, and yet they follow it. They love sin as sin. They have been losers by their misconduct, and yet they pursue it. We have often seen persons reduced to rags and beggary by their folly and vice, and we have helped them to begin life again; but in a few days they have been in the same destitution through the same drunkenness, or vice, or idleness which brought them to the dogs before. They seem incorrigible, obstinately set on their iniquities; and all that can be done for them by the scourges of God's hand does not affect them in the least for the better. In this there is an aversion to goodness, a love of evil, and so far a hatred of God. "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

This introduces the element of *presumption*, of deliberation, of resolve; and when men sin so, there is a talent of lead in the measure of their iniquity, and it weighs exceeding heavily. Sins of impetuous passion, and of wild juvenile haste, are bad enough; but there is not in them the element of intense wickedness which is evidently present in the deliberate pursuit of sin in the teeth of suffering, or in the continuance in evil when its results are daily felt. On such evenings as these it is strange what sorts of people make up the congregation at the Tabernacle. I may be speaking to-night—I do not doubt I am —to some that, year after year, against a mother's tears, and the

importunities of friends, and the advice of those who have wished them well, have still kept on and on in a sinful course which they themselves condemn. Knowing better, they persist in wrong. Knowing what the end will be, they are madly set upon their own ruin. O sirs, if you choose your own delusions, if you will ride steeplechase to hell over hedge and ditch, if you will be damned, who is to stand in your way, and what shall be said by way of pity for you? O God, have mercy upon such! Many in this city are breaking a father's heart, and bringing a mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. After all they have endured, they still cling to their filthy idols, and go after their impure lusts; and they will do so until God shall end their days in his wrath, and summon them to his bar. My heart breaks at the thought of some of you! Will you never repent, and give God glory? Will you pursue your follies even into the unquenchable fires?

Now, this is a dreadful thing—that the judgments of God should, through the wickedness of men, even lead them to still greater sin.

IV. Therefore, in the last place—and with this I finish—THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE TO BE VIEWED WITH GREAT DISCRETION. He who studies them must do it with solemn care.

Judgments tend to good. Do not forget that. They ought to tend to good to you who are exercised by them. How many are aroused to think of better things by sickness in their own persons, or sudden death in others! National judgments are frequently a ministry of grace. The first year in which I came to London, I was greatly struck with the access that one had at all hours of day and night to people's houses, into which no ministers of Christ had ever been welcomed before. I remember, at two o'clock one Monday morning, I was in a house, now pulled down, close to London Bridge, to see a man who had spent the Sunday at Brighton, and had come home to die with the cholera. Yes, they sent for me at dead of night often and often then; and rich and poor—it mattered not, if they found some one willing to come and visit them—were eager for you to read and pray with them; for death was all around us, making havoc in these streets. They are not so eager for a visit now. So far, cholera did arouse our neighbours, and they flocked to hear the Word out of very fear. So much of benefit there may be in the plagues which are shot from the quiver of providence.

And *judgments do impress some men.* Many will come to hear a sermon just after a dear baby has died, or a brother or father has been taken away. Death whips the careless into thought. Then there is an impression. So far so good, if God makes use of it by his Spirit. Judgments may be black horses upon which Christ rides triumphantly to the doors of men's minds.

Some, no doubt, *are sweetly subdued by judgments,* when these are qualified with grace. The grace of God working with their afflictions, they bow themselves beneath the chastening hand; and when they do this, it is good for them that they are afflicted. God has sent the black dog to fetch the wandering sheep into the fold, and it runs to the shepherd through fear of the dog. So far judgments may do great good, by humbling, softening, and bringing down. O Lord, use them to this end among the afflicted ones around us!

But then, next, still let it be recollected that *these things will not work good of themselves*. I want you to remember this, because I have known people say, "Well, if I were afflicted I might be converted. If I lay sick I might be saved." Oh, do not think so. Sickness and sorrow of themselves are no helps to salvation. Pain and poverty are not evangelists; disease and despair are not apostles. Look at the lost in hell. Suffering has effected no good in them. He that was filthy here is filthy there. He that was unjust in this life is unjust in the life to come. There is nothing in pain and suffering that, by their own natural operation, will tend to purification. Place no hope in that direction. If there were a purgatory of years of pain, it would be only purgative in name, for suffering cannot cleanse from sin.

Think of the many who are every day suffering as the result of their sinful conduct; and yet the more they suffer the more they sin. We know many such. You need not take your walks far abroad before you will find men plunged in poverty, whose poverty is traceable distinctly to their own fault, and in that fault they still continue, and even grow worse and worse for all they suffer.

So it is with men that lie a-dying. You must not suppose that their pain is any help to them towards repentance. Poor souls their anguish drives good thoughts out of their minds. Death-bed repentances it were hard to estimate: we must leave them with God. But it is a sorrowful fact that those which seemed to be death-bed repentances have seldom turned out to be worth anything when the men have recovered. In fact, I do not remember a case in which the person who recovered has been at all what he said he would be when he thought that he was on the borders of the grave. So you see, suffering is no help to repentance, and it may be a hindrance.

Now, what I have to say to you is this. *Oh, that God would lead you to repent now, before any of his judgments fall upon you!* Why should we not repent at once? Surely we ought to repent of doing wrong when we perceive that we are wronging so good a God. He has not cut you down; he has not taken away your wife: is this a reason for being hard-hearted? It ought to tell the other way. He has spared that fair-haired child to you; he has not allowed your business to be ruined by your neglect; he has helped you although you have been hurting yourself. Well, then, turn to him. Drawn by his love, turn to him. Say in your heart, "I cannot offend any more. I cannot sin against so good, so kind a God as this."

Permit me also to say to you how much nobler and sweeter a thing it is to be drawn than to be driven. How much better to come cheerfully and willingly, led by motives of love to God, than to be like the bullock that is forced to bear the yoke, or the "horse, or the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Must you be beaten to Christ? How much more honourable to turn to God in the cheerful, bright days that are now yours. Oh, that I could persuade you! If there is any right principle in you, you will yield, and glorify God by hearty repentance.

And then, again, recollect, you can repent now so much more clearly than in the hour of sickness. God helping you, this is a very good hour for repenting. I find that when I am in great pain, I cannot

work out a case. I say to people, "Oh, don't come to me with your questions. There, go and do whatever you like. I shall be sure to say the wrong thing: my judgment is not clear, I am in too much pain." How will you acceptably repent when you can hardly keep from crying out with agony? How will you rightly repent when the head is aching, when the heart is palpitating, when you are gasping for breath, when the death-sweat beads your brow? Oh, that you would think of these things now, while your intellect is clear and your body is not racked and tortured! God help you so to do!

And do you not see how much more likely it is to be genuine repentance, if it be rendered freely? You are not frightened now, and are more likely to be your honest self. You are not under terror now, and therefore you are not so likely to play the hypocrite. To-night you have come into this place in good health, happy and cheerful, and God has made everything bright about you; what can I better commend to you than immediately to seek the Lord? Does not wisdom herself speak, and cry aloud to you now? Forsake sin, and turn with purpose of heart to Jesus Christ the Saviour, whose Spirit is even now working with you while these words are being spoken. Yield to the sacred pressure of the Spirit of God. That which now inclines thee to relent is the good Spirit of love and mercy. Bow thyself before it, as the wheat ripened for the sickle bows before the wind. Give glory to God by yielding to the movements of his Spirit. Cry out, I pray you, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. I would quit my sin; help me to quit it now for Jesus' sake, and to give thee glory." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation xv. 5 to xvi. 21.

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THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 2ND, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The trial of your faith."—1 Peter i. 7.

IT is a great thing if any man can truthfully speak to you, my brother, about "*your faith*," for all men have not faith, and wherever faith is found, it is the token of divine favour. True faith is, in every case, of the operation of the Spirit of God. Its nature is purifying, elevating, heavenly. It is, of all things that can be cultivated in the human breast, one of the most precious. It is called, "like precious faith," and it is styled "the faith of God's elect." Wherever faith is found, it is the sure mark of eternal election, the sign of a blessed condition, the forecast of a heavenly destiny. It is the eye of the renewed soul, the hand of the regenerated mind, the mouth of the new-born spirit. It is the evidence of spiritual life: it is the mainspring of holiness: it is the foundation of delight: it is the prophecy of glory: it is the dawn of endless knowledge. If thou hast faith, thou hast infinitely more than he who has all the world, and yet is destitute of faith. To him that believeth it is said, "All things are yours." Faith is the assurance of sonship, the pledge of inheritance, the grasp of boundless possession, the perception of the invisible. Within thy faith there lies glory, even as the oak sleeps within the acorn. If thou hast faith, thou needest not ask for much more, save that thy faith may grow exceedingly, and that all the promises which are made to it may be known and grasped by thee. Time would fail me to tell of the powers, the privileges, the possessions, and the prospects of faith. He that hath it is blessed; for he pleases God, he is justified before the throne of holiness, he hath full access to the throne of grace, and he has the preparation for reigning with Christ for ever.

So far everything is delightful. But then comes in this word, which somewhat startles, and, if we are cowardly, may also frighten —"*The trial* of your faith." See you the thorn which grows with this rose! You cannot gather the fragrant flower without its rough

companion. You cannot possess the faith without experiencing the trial; nor eat the lamb without the bitter herbs. These two things are put together—faith and trial; and it is of that trial of your faith that I am going to speak at this time, as God shall help me. It may be, my brother, that words said at this good hour shall comfort you while you undergo the sorer trial of your faith. May the Holy Spirit, who nurtures faith, and preserves and perfects it under its trial, help our thoughts at this hour!

I. And, first, let me say of it, YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED SURELY. You may rest assured of that. A man may have faith, and be for the present without trial; but no man ever had faith, and was all his life without trial. That could not—must not be; for *faith, in the very nature of it, implies a degree of trial.* I believe the promise of God. So far my faith is tried in believing the promise, in waiting for the fulfilment of the promise, in holding on to an assurance of that promise while it is delayed, and in continuing to expect the promise, and to act upon it until it is in all points fulfilled to me. I do not see how that can be faith at all which is not tried by its own exercise. Take the very happiest and smoothest lives; there must, at any rate, be the trial of faith in taking the promise and pleading it before God in prayer, and expecting the fulfilment of it. Be not mistaken. God never gave us faith to play with. It is a sword, but it was not made for presentation on a gala day, nor to be worn on state occasions only, nor to be exhibited upon a parade ground. It is a sword that was meant to cut and wound and slay; and he that has it girt about him may expect, between here and heaven, that he shall know what battle means. Faith is a sound sea-going vessel, and was not meant to lie in dock and perish of dry rot. To whom God has given faith, it is as though one gave a lantern to his friend because he expected it to be dark on his way home. The very gift of faith is a hint to you that you will want it; that at certain points and places you will especially require it, and that, at all points, and in every place, you will really need it. You cannot live without faith: for again and again we are told—"the just shall live by faith." Believing is our living, and we, therefore, need it always. And if God give thee great faith, my dear brother, thou must expect great trials; for, in proportion as thy faith shall grow, thou wilt have to do more, and endure more. Little boats may keep close to shore, as becomes little boats; but if God make thee a great vessel, and load thee with a rich freight, he means that thou shouldest know what great billows are, and should feel their fury till thou seest "his wonders in the deep." That God, who has made nothing in vain, especially makes nothing in the spiritual kingdom in vain; and if he makes faith, it is with the design that it should be used to the utmost and exercised to the full.

Expect trial, also, because *trial is the very element of faith.* Faith is a salamander that lives in the fire, a star which moves in a lofty sphere, a diamond which bores its way through the rock. Faith without trial is like a diamond uncut, the brilliance of which has never been seen. Untried faith is such little faith that some have thought it no faith at all. What a fish would be without water, or a bird without air, that would be faith without trial. If thou hast faith,

thou mayest surely expect that thy faith will be tested: the great Keeper of the treasures admits no coin to his coffers without testing. It is so in the nature of faith, and so in the order of its living: it thrives not, save in such weather as might seem to threaten its death.

Indeed, *it is the honour of faith to be tried.* Shall any man say, "I have faith, but I have never had to believe under difficulties"? Who knows whether thou hast any faith? Shall a man say, "I have great faith in God, but I have never had to use it in anything more than the ordinary affairs of life, where I could probably have done without it as well as with it"? Is this to the honour and praise of thy faith? Dost thou think that such a faith as this will bring any great glory to God, or bring to thee any great reward? If so, thou art mightily mistaken. He that has tested God, and whom God has tested, is the man that shall have it said of him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Had Abraham stopped in Ur of the Chaldees with his friends, and rested there, and enjoyed himself, where had been his faith? He had God's command to quit his country to go to a land which he had never seen, to sojourn there with God as a stranger, dwelling in tents; and in his obedience to that call his faith began to be illustrious. Where had been the glory of his faith, if it had not been called to brave and self-denying deeds? Would he ever have risen to that supreme height, to be "the Father of the faithful," if he had not grown old, and his body dead, and yet he had believed that God would give him seed of his aged wife Sarah, according to the promise? It was blessed faith that made him feel that nothing was impossible to God. If Isaac had been born to him in the days of his strength, where had been his faith? And when it came to that severer test, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of"—when he rose up early, and clave the wood, and took his son, and went three days' journey, setting his face like a flint to obey the command of God; and when at last he drew the knife, in faithful obedience to the divine command, then was his faith confessed, commended, and crowned. Then the Lord said, "Now I know"; as if, even to God, the best evidence of Abraham's faith had then been displayed, when he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, reckoning that God could restore Isaac from the dead if need be, but that it was his to obey the supreme command, and trust all consequences with God, who could not lie. Herein his faith won great renown, and he became "the Father of the faithful," because he was the most tried of believers, and yet surpassed them all in childlike belief in his God. If God, then, has given to any one of us a faith which is honourable and precious, it has full surely been submitted to its own due measure of trial; and if it is to be still more precious, it has yet more trials to endure.

We remember also two reasons for the trial of faith. The trial of your faith is sent *to prove its sincerity.* If it will not stand trial, what is the good of it? That gold which dissolves in the furnace, and disappears amid the flame, is not the gold which shall be current with the merchant; and that faith of thine, which is no sooner tried than straightway it evaporates, art thou not well rid of it? Of what use

would it be to thee in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment? No; thou canst not be sure that thy faith is true faith till it is tried faith. Thou canst not be certain that it is worth having till it has been fitly tested, and brought to the touchstone of trial.

It must also be tested *to prove its strength.* We sometimes fancy that we have strong faith when, indeed, our faith is very weak; and how are we to know whether it be weak or strong till it be tried? A man that should lie in bed week after week, and perhaps get the idle whim into his head that he was very strong, would be pretty certain to be mistaken. It is only when he sets about work requiring muscular strength that he will discover how strong or how weak he is. God would not have us form a wrong estimate of ourselves. He loves not that we should say that we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, when we are the reverse; and therefore he sends to us the trial of our faith that we may understand how strong or how weak it is.

And besides that, dear friends, *the trial of our faith is necessary to remove its dross.* There are many accretions of sordid matter about our purest graces. We are apt ourselves to add to the bulk of our graces without adding to the real value of them. We mistake quantity for quality; and a great deal of what we think we have of Christian experience, and Christian knowledge, and Christian zeal, and Christian patience, is only the supposition that we have these graces, and not the real possession of them. So the fire grows fiercer, and the mass grows smaller than it was before. Is there any loss therein? I trow not. The gold loses nothing by the removal of its dross, and our faith loses nothing by the dissipation of its apparent force. Faith may apparently lose, but it actually gains. It may seem to be diminished, but it is not truly diminished. All is there that was worth having. "Why, a week ago," says one, "I used to sing, and think that I had the full assurance of faith; and now I can scarcely tell whether I am one of God's people or not." Now, you know how much faith you really possess. You can now tell how much was solid, and how much was sham; for had that which has failed you been real faith, it would not have been consumed by any trial through which it has passed. You have lost the froth from the top of the cup, but all that was really worth having is still there. It must be so, for as faith is not born of earthly things, neither can earthly things kill it, nor even take from it one true particle.

Understand, then, dear friends, that for many necessary purposes there is a needs be for trial. Peter says here, "If need be" that there should be a trial of your faith. You will get that trial, because God, in his wisdom, will give faith what faith needs. Do not be anxious to enter into trial. Do not fret if temptation does not come just now. You will have it time enough. Between the day of our new birth and the day of our entering into our inheritance, we shall have quite sufficient trial of our faith. We need not be uneasy if for a while we are at ease, for there are months enough left to the year to give winter its full measure of frosts and storms.

II. Now, secondly, YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED VARIOUSLY. The trial of our faith does not come to all persons in the same way. *There*

are some whose faith is tried each day in their communion with God. They pray this prayer: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting." That prayer is heard constantly; the visitations of the Lord are granted to them, and as the Lord comes, he tries them; for, believe me, there is no surer trial of our souls than the drawing near of God to our souls. Apart from any outward affliction, that searching thought, that inward feeling, which is somewhat more than thought; that holy, secret trembling, which comes upon our spirit when God draws near, is God's constant trial of our graces. If you walk away from God, and live without fellowship with him, you may retain in your heart much falsehood, and fancy that you are full of spiritual gifts and graces; but if you draw near to God, and walk with him, you will not be able to retain a false opinion of yourself. Remember what the Lord is. Our God is a consuming fire. I have often reminded you of the way in which people try to improve upon the Scripture when they say, "God out of Christ is a consuming fire." The Bible does not so speak. It says, "For our God is a consuming fire." That is, God in Christ, who is our God, is a consuming fire; and when his people live in him, the very presence of God consumes in them their love of sin and all their pretentious graces, and fictitious attainments, so that the false disappears, and only the true survives. The presence of perfect holiness is killing to empty boastings and hollow pretences. You need not ask for any of those various forms of trial which God sends in the order of providence: you may rest quite satisfied with his presence, as the most effectual purgation; for "his fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor." Whenever Jesus abides with us, "he shall sit as a refiner." Whoever he may leave alone in their defilement, "he will purify the sons of Levi." It is the Lord himself that will be as a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap. Who may abide the day of his coming? Who that loves holiness would wish to escape it? Our prayer should be—

"Refining fire go through my soul."

Ay, let the devouring flame go through me, and through me yet again, till this earthly grossness shall begin to disappear. As Moses soon put his shoes off from his feet when he beheld God at the burning bush, so shall we put off the superfluities of our supposed spiritual experience, and come to the real, naked foot of truth, if we are permitted to stand before God in accepted sincerity. Thus you see there is a constant trial of our faith, even in that which is its greatest joy and glory, namely its power to make us see the Lord.

But the Lord uses other methods with his servants. I believe that *he frequently tries us by the blessings which he sends us.* This is a fact which is too much overlooked. When a man is permitted to grow rich, what a trial of faith is hidden away in that condition! It is one of the severest of providential tests! Where I have known one man fail through poverty, I have known fifty men fail through riches. When our friends get on in the world, and have a long stretch of prosperity, they should invite their brethren to offer special prayer for them, that they may be preserved: for the thick clay is heavy stuff to

walk upon, and when the feet slip into it, and it adheres to you, it makes travelling to heaven a very difficult thing. When we do not cling to wealth, it will not harm us; but there is a deal of bird-lime in money. You that have no riches may yet find a test in your daily mercies: your domestic comfort, that loving wife, those dear children —all these may tempt you to walk by sight instead of by faith. Ay, and continued health, the absence of all depression of spirit, and the long abiding of friends and relatives, may all make you self-contented, and keep you away from your God. It is a great trial of faith to have much for sight to rest upon. To be in the dark—altogether in the dark—is a grand thing for faith; for then you are sure that what you see is not seen of the flesh, but is in very deed a vision of spiritual faith. To be under a cloud is a trial, truly; but not one-half so much a trial as it is to have continually the light of this world. We are so apt to mistake the light of carnal comfort for the light of God, that it is well to see how we fare without it.

One form of this trial is praise. You know how Solomon puts it: "As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise." A Christian minister may go on preaching very earnestly, and God will help him, though everybody opposes him; but when the world comes and pats him on the back, and pride whispers, "You are a fine fellow; you are a great man!" then comes the test of the man. How few there are that can endure the warm atmosphere of congratulation! It is dangerously relaxing to the spirit. Yea, nobody can keep himself right under it, unless the almighty grace of God shall sustain his faith. When the soft winds blow they bring with them the temptation, "Now preach the doctrines that tickle men's ears!" "Go in to be scientific, and learned, and clever! Get the approbation of the great ones of the world, and the leaders of advanced thought in the church." And unless you say, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God," such a trial of faith may be too much for you. "Oh," says one, "that will not fall to my lot." No, no; you will not be a popular preacher, perhaps; but then, you may be very acceptable in the company wherein you move, and worldly people may flatter you to the verge of ruin. You sing very nicely, do you not? Well, they may want you to sing them a song that is not one of the songs of Zion. Because of your natural attainments, and the amiability of your temper, you may become a great favourite with ungodly people; and that is an intense trial to the faith of a child of God. The friendship of the world is as much enmity with God as it used to be in apostolic times. It is a bad sign when a courtier is in great favour with the king's enemies. Stand up, and stand out, as the servant of God, and in whatever sphere you move, make it your one and only business to serve my God, whether you offend or please. Happy shall you be if you survive the trial of your faith which this will involve!

Another trial of faith is exceedingly common and perilous nowadays, and that is, *heretical doctrine and false teaching*. There be some who are carried away with this wind of doctrine, and others carried away with the other; and blessed is he who is not offended in Christ; for, naturally, the cross of Christ is offensive to the minds of men.

There are temptations that rise out of the gospel itself, yea, out of its very depth and breadth. There is a trial of faith in reading the Scriptures. You come across a doctrine which you cannot understand, and because you cannot understand it, you are tempted not to receive it. Or, when a truth which you have received appears to be hard, and speaks to you in an unlovely fashion, so that your natural feelings are aroused against it; this is a trial of your faith. Remember how our Lord Jesus lost quite a company of disciples on a certain occasion. He had taught a doctrine about eating his flesh and drinking his blood; and from that hour many went back, and walked no more with him, till the Saviour had to say, even to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Truth is not always welcome to our ignorance, or to our prejudice, and herein is a trial of faith. Will we believe ourselves or our God? Do we want to believe God's truth, or do we wish to have the Lord's message flavoured to our taste? Do we expect the preacher to play our chosen tunes, and speak our opinions? Beloved, it does us good to be well rasped sometimes; to have a word come to us, not as a sweet wine, but as a purging medicine, that shall search us through and through, and make us enquire before God, "Are we true men, or are we aliens?" If we run in the same line with God's truth, we are true; but when we run counter to the truth of God, we are ourselves untrue. It is not the Book that is to be altered: our hearts want altering. Happy is that man whose faith can endure the trial of the Book. "Is not the word of the Lord like a fire or a hammer?" This is so even to the Lord's own people.

But the trial of our faith usually comes in the form of affliction. Our jealous lover uses tests that it may be seen whether he has our heart. The trial of your faith comes thus:—You say, "Lord Jesus, I love thee. Thou art my best beloved." "Well," says the heavenly Lover, "if it be so, then the child that nestles in thy bosom will sicken and die. What wilt thou say then?" If thou be indeed true in what thou hast stated concerning thy supreme love to Jesus, thou wilt give up thy darling at his call, and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." The Lord is very jealous of our love. I do not mean that he is so towards all of you: I speak of his own people. The more he loves us, the more he tests us. Whatever it may be with us poor creatures, it is always so with Jesus, that his love goes with his jealousy, and his jealousy with his love. Sometimes he says, "Good woman, I shall take away thy husband, on whom thou leanest, that thou mayest lean the more on me." I remember Mr. Rutherford, writing to a lady who had lost five children and her husband, says to her, "Oh, how Christ must love you! He would take every bit of your heart to himself. He would not permit you to reserve any of your soul for any earthly thing." Can we stand that test? Can we let all go for his sake? Do you answer that you can? Time will show.

My Lord sometimes comes to me in this fashion. He says, "I have made thee to trust me these many years. I have supplied the wants of thy work by liberal friends. I am about to remove a generous helper." I go to the grave of my friend, and the suggestion dogs me, "Who is to provide for the Orphanage and the College, after

other dear friends are buried? Can you trust God then?" Blessed be the name of the Lord, this fiery trial has never even left the smell of fire upon me; I know whom I have believed. Then a dear brother, our best worker, our heartiest helper, comes to me, and says, "Good-bye, dear Pastor; perhaps I may never see you again on earth." He is very ill, and about to lie under the surgeon's knife, and the fear is that he may not rally. I go home, and say to myself, "What shall I do without this useful man?" And then I have to say, "Why, do? Do what I have done before—trust in the living God." If you once get to walk the walk of faith, the Lord will often try you in this way, to see whether you come up to your own confession—whether you really trust in the Lord, and have your expectation from him alone. Can you truly say,

> "Yea, shouldst thou take them all away,
> Yet would I not repine"?

If every earthly prop were knocked away, could you stand by the lone power of your foundation? God may not send you this or that trial, but he will send you a sufficient amount of trial to let you see whether your faith is truth or talk, whether you have truly entered the spiritual world, or have only dreamed of doing so. Believe me, there is a great difference between a diamond and a paste gem, and the Lord would not have mistaken at the last. So, you see, the trials of faith are very various.

III. In the third place, YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED INDIVIDUALLY. The text says, the trial of *your* faith. O dear friend, it is an interesting subject, is it not, the trial of faith? It is not quite so pleasant to study alone the trial of *your* faith. It is stern work when it comes to be *your* trial, and the trial of *your* faith. You have not gone much into that particular department, perhaps. Well, I say again, do not wish to do so. Do not ask for trials. Children must not ask to be whipped, nor saints pray to be tested. There is a little book which you will have to eat, and it will be bitter in your mouth, but sweet in your bowels: that book is the trial of your faith. The Lord Jesus Christ has been glorified by the trial of his people's faith. He has to be glorified by the trial of *your* faith. You are very obscure, perhaps, dear brother. You have but few talents, my dear sister. But, nevertheless, there is a particular shape and form of trial that will have to be exercised upon you rather than upon anyone else. "Oh," say you, "I know it, sir; I know it." Well, then, if you know it, do not complain of it; because, when you have your own trial, and the trial of your own faith, you are only treated like the rest of the family. What son is there whom the father chasteneth not? You are only treated like the Head of the family. You are only treated in the way which the great Father of the family knows is necessary for us all. God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without trial, and he never will have until he has taken us all home out of this world. Why should we expect that God should deal better with us than he does with the rest of his chosen? Indeed it would not be better, after all, because these trials are the means of working out our lasting good. But if it were not so, who am I, and

who are you, that God should pamper us? Would we have him put us in a glass case and shield us from the trials which are common to all the chosen seed? I ask no such portion. Let me fare as the saints fare. I only wish to have their bread and their water, and love their Father, and follow their Guide, and find their home. We will take our meals with them, whatever God puts upon the table for them, will we not? The trial of our faith will be all our own, and yet it will be in fellowship with all the family of grace.

IV. YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED SEARCHINGLY. It will be no child's play to come under the divine tests. Our faith is not merely jingled on the counter like the shilling which the tradesman suspects, but it is tried with fire; for so it is written, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." The blows of the flail of tribulation are not given in sport, but in awful earnest, as some of us know who have been chastened sore, almost unto death. The Lord tries the very life of our faith; not its beauty and its strength alone, but its very existence. The iron enters into the soul; the sharp medicine searches the inmost parts of the belly; the man's real self is made to endure the trial. It is easy to talk of being tried, but it is by no means so simple a matter to endure the ordeal.

V. Let me yet further observe, that YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED FOR AN ABUNDANTLY USEFUL PURPOSE. The trial of your faith will increase, develop, deepen, and *strengthen it.* "Oh," you have said, "I wish I had more faith." Your prayer will be heard through your having more trial. Often in our prayers we have sought for a stronger faith to look within the veil. The way to stronger faith usually lies along the rough pathway of sorrow. Only as faith is contested will faith be confirmed. I do not know whether my experience is that of all God's people; but I am afraid that all the grace that I have got out of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours, might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows, and pains, and griefs, is altogether incalculable. What do I not owe to the hammer and the anvil, the fire and the file? What do I not owe to the crucible and the furnace, the bellows that have blown up the coals, and the hand which has thrust me into the heat? Affliction is the best bit of furniture in my house. It is the best book in a minister's library. We may wisely rejoice in tribulation, because it worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and by that way we are exceedingly enriched, and our faith grows strong.

The trial of our faith is useful, not only because it strengthens it, but because it *leads to a discovery of our faith to ourselves.* I notice an old Puritan using this illustration. He says, you shall go into a wood when you please, but if you are very quiet, you will not know whether there is a partridge, or a pheasant, or a rabbit in it; but when you begin to move about, or make a noise, you very soon see the living creatures. They rise or they run. So, when affliction comes into the soul, and makes a disturbance and breaks our peace, up rise our graces. Faith comes out of its hiding, and love leaps from its secret place. I remember Mr. William Jay saying that birds' nests are hard to find in summer-time, but anyone could find a bird's nest

in winter. When all the leaves are off the trees the nests are visible to all. Often in the days of our prosperity, we fail to find our faith; but when our adversity comes, the winter of our trial bares the boughs, and we see our faith at once. We are sure that we believe now, for we feel the effect of faith upon our character. "Before I was afflicted I went astray," said David, "but now have I kept thy word." He found that his faith was really there by his keeping God's Word in the time of his affliction. It is a great mercy, then, to have your faith tried, that you may be sure beyond all manner of question that you are a true believer.

Besides, when faith is tried *it brings God glory.* Oh, how it honours God when a man can say with a smiling face in prospect of death, "Good-bye, dear sir, I may never see you here again, but we shall meet above"! We who are in health envy the brother who has such joy amid sharp pain. I went the other day to see a dear brother who has since then gone above. He was swollen with dropsy, and was close to the brink of the grave; but to hear the song of assurance, and the utterances of his joy was most sweet and cheering. It made me feel how good God is to his servants. He never leaves nor forsakes them, when they come to their most painful times.

This trial of our faith *does good to our fellow-Christians.* They see how we are supported, and they learn to bear their troubles bravely. I do not know anything that is better for making us brave than to see others believe in Christ and bear up manfully. To see that blind saint so happy makes us ashamed to be sad. To see content in an inmate of the workhouse compels us to be thankful. Sufferers are our tutors; they educate us for the skies. When men of God can suffer—when they can bear poverty, bereavement or sickness, and still rejoice in God, we learn the way to live the higher and more Christly life. When Patrick Hamilton had been burned in Scotland, one said to his persecutors, "If you are going to burn any more, you had better do it in a cellar, for the smoke of Hamilton's burning has opened the eyes of hundreds." It was always so. Suffering saints are living seed. Oh, that God might help us to such faith, that when we come to suffer in life, or to expire in death, we may so glorify God that others may believe in him! May we preach sermons by our faith which shall be better than sermons in words.

My time has gone, and I have much to say to you. I wanted to say to you about the trial of your faith, dear friends, that SOME ARE TRIED VERY SPECIALLY. Some endure many more tests than others, and that is because God has a great favour to them. Many men God does not love well enough to whip them. They are the devil's children, and the heavenly Father does not trouble them. They are none of his, and so he lets them have a happy life, and perhaps an easy death: "there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." But they are to be pitied, and not envied. Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall weep! Woe unto you who have your portion in this life, for it shall go ill with you in the world to come! God's children are often much chastened because they are much loved. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Men

take most trouble with that which is most precious. A common pebble will be let alone, but a diamond must be fretted on the wheel till its brilliance is displayed.

Some persons are also much tried in their faith because they are very fit for it. God has fitted the back for a heavy burden, and the burden will be sent. He has constituted them on purpose that they should be helpful in filling up "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, for his body's sake, which is the church." Men build strong columns because they are meant to carry great weights. So God makes great Christians, on purpose that they should bear great afflictions for his glory.

He does this also because he would have some men do him a special service. What an honour it is to do the Lord a special service! When some man in our army behaves himself very grandly, and wins a battle, what will her Majesty do? Why, she will send for him next time a war arises. If any of you are brave in bearing affliction, you shall have the honour of enduring more affliction. Does not every soldier court the opportunity of service? He that looks over his soldiers says of a certain one, "I shall not send him; he is feeble and faint-hearted; yonder veteran is the man for me." Do not think that you would be honoured by being allowed to ride to heaven on a feather bed. True honour lies in being permitted to bear and suffer, side by side with him of the bloody sweat and of the five open wounds. This is the guerdon of the saints—that they should on earth be decorated with

"Many a sorrow, many a tear."

They shall walk with their Lord in white, for they are worthy.

Yes, dear friends, the Lord often sends us greater trials than others, because he means to qualify us for greater enjoyments. If you want to make a pool capable of holding more water, you dig it out, do you not? And many a man has been dug and enlarged by affliction. The enlargements of trial enable us to hold more grace and more glory. The more a gracious man suffers, the more he becomes capable of entering into fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and so into fellowship with Christ in his glory by-and-by.

Come, let us be comforted as to the trial of our faith. There is no hurt in it. It is all for good. The trial of our faith is entirely in the hands of God. Nobody can try us without God's permission. He will try us just as much as we ought to be tried, and no more. While he tries us with one hand he will sustain us with the other. If he gives us bitters, he will give us sweets in full proportion. A dear sister said to me this week, "When I used to be in poverty and in trouble, the Word of God was much more sweet to me than it is now that I am prospered." I do not wonder at it. I have made a similar remark when I have been long without an illness. Some of us have cried, "Take me back to my sickness again. Take me back to slander and rebuke again." A Scotch saint said that when they met in the moss, or by the hill-side, and were harried by Claverhouse and his dragoons, Christ was present at the sacraments in the heather much more than he ever was afterwards when they got into the kirk,

and sat down quietly. Our worst days are often our best days, and in the dark we see stars that we never saw in the light. So we will not care a pin what it is that may befall us here, so long as God is with us, and our faith in him is genuine. Christian people, I am not going to condole with you, but I congratulate you upon your troubles, for the cross of Christ is precious.

But you that do not love my Lord and Master, if you roll in riches, if your eyes stand out with fatness, I mourn over you. Bullocks fattened for the slaughter, your joys are but the prelude to your woes. Oh, that God would have mercy upon you, and that you would have mercy upon yourselves, and flee at once to Jesus, and put your trust in him! Faith in the work, offices, and person of the Lord Jesus is the way of salvation. May he help you to run in it at this hour, for his name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew vii. 13—29.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—691, 731, 700.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,—In answer to a general desire that I should let my beloved readers know of my condition, I will write a line or two each week. Owing to extreme weakness it has taken me the whole week to reach my sunny retreat, but at each stage I have found myself a little better, and I can now walk a little—a very little; yet for this I am deeply grateful to him "who restoreth our life." I hope, by rest in this genial climate, to recover tone, strength, and freshness of mind, and then I trust all will be spent, in future days, for God's glory. Through the blessing of God upon the labours of Messrs. Fullerton and Smith a cheering work is going on at the Tabernacle. I beg my readers to pray that the Lord may be glorified among the people in the absence of the usual worker, and that the printed sermons may speak with power when the preacher himself is silent.

Yours, dear friends, in Christ Jesus,

Mentone, Nov. 24, 1888. C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

IDOLS FOUND WANTING, BUT JEHOVAH FOUND FAITHFUL.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 9TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday evening, September 27th, 1888.

"Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."—Isaiah xlvi. 1—4.

THE confidence of Babylon is buried among her heaps of rubbish, for her gods have fallen from their thrones. "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth." As for us, beloved, our trust is in the living God, who lives to bear and carry his chosen, even in Jehovah, the only true Lord. We begin our spiritual life by faith in him, for till faith comes we have no power to become the sons of God. Our spiritual life will have to be continued in the same way of trust in the Lord, "for the just shall live by faith." We live by faith upon the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. We rejoice that we shall never have to change our confidence, for our God will never be carried into captivity, nor torn from his throne. Our faith is built upon a rock that can never be moved. Nothing in the past has shaken the foundation of our faith; nothing in the present can move it; nothing in the future will undermine it. Whatever may occur in the ages to come, there will always be good reason for believing in Jehovah and his faithful word. The great truths which he has revealed will never be disproved; the great promises he has made will never be retracted; the great purposes he has devised will never be abandoned. So long as we live, so long shall we have a refuge, a hope, a confidence, that can never be removed.

His sovereign mercy knows no end,
His faithfulness shall still endure;
And those who on his word depend
Shall find his word for ever sure.

No. 2,056.

That part of our text which says, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you," may seem to be a promise made to old age. So, indeed, it is. Many a hoary saint has made a soft pillow of this precious promise, and has rested upon it with delight in the days of his decay. But yet the text, if it be rightly read, is a promise to the people of God at any and every period between their birth and their death. While the Lord does say that he will carry us to hoar hairs, yet he begins by telling us that he has carried us from the womb, and that he will carry us still. All tenses meet in these verses: "Hearken, O house of Jacob, which are borne by me; which are carried from the womb. Even to your old age I am he; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." The Lord is good to us in all tenses, and in all ways. We shall not, alone, consider in our discourse the mercy of God to those who are near the end of their pilgrimage, but that same mercy to his people throughout their wilderness journey, from the day when they first ate of the Paschal Lamb, and quitted Egypt, even to that hour when the Jordan was dried up, and they took possession of the land which floweth with milk and honey. Our experimental dealings with God make us know that he is our gracious Helper from the first to the last. When we begin with the Alpha of our life's spelling, we find him good; and when we come to the Omega, and faintly pronounce the last letter of life, we know still better how gracious he is. Bel and Nebo disappoint their votaries, but Jehovah is our God for ever and ever, and he will be our guide even unto death.

I. I shall begin my sermon by calling your attention, first, to the set-off and background, which are placed behind the brilliant promise which is herein given to the Lord's people.

Observe that FALSE CONFIDENCES PASS AWAY.

The Lord has made a full end of *false gods and their worship*. "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden: they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity." Bel and Nebo were two great gods of Babylon. You get the name of Bel in the name of king Belshazzar; and the name of Nebo in the name of Nebuchadnezzar. They were esteemed to be such great deities that their kings were named after them, and professed to be their servants. Bel and Nebo stood in Babylon supreme. The Babylonian empire which served these deities was so strong as to be invincible: it carried its cruel sword into all nations, and piled up the dead bodies of men in heaps: it was therefore dreaded in every part of the world; and not without cause. What kingdom or empire could stand against it? If you had gone to Babylon, and seen its mighty walls, its lofty towers, its engines of war, its wonders of art, its multitudes of heroes, you would have thought that the worship of Bel would endure for ever, and that the image of Nebo would stand there to be adored of mortals while the world existed. But these idols —always a mere deceit—proved themselves powerless in the day of trial. Cyrus came, the Euphrates was dried up, the empire of Babylon ended, and the gods were discredited for all ages. In the ruin of

Babylon the gods became a prey. The golden images themselves were too precious to be left standing in Babylon, and too little venerated to be treated with respect. They were taken off to Persia as a spoil, and became a burden to the weary beasts. Huge images of less costly material were dragged down with ropes, dashed in pieces, or buried beneath heaps of ruins. Ah me! what a melancholy fate for things which were called gods, and received the reverence of great nations! Even in these latter days, we have had an illustration of "Bel boweth down, and Nebo stoopeth," when Mr. Layard went to the ruins of Babylon and Nineveh, and dragged out those huge bulls, which stand to-day in the British Museum, objects of our curiosity, but certainly not of our worship. "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth." The false gods that reigned supreme over so many myriads of men were made contemptible. The prophet cries, "They stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden, but themselves have gone into captivity." Not only concerning Bel and Nebo, but concerning many a set of heathen deities, a note of exultant derision may be taken up. "The idols he shall utterly abolish." As potters' vessels are broken, so are the gods of the heathen ground into dust and treated as nothing.

The like thing has happened unto *false systems of teaching*. They have risen, and they have dominated over the minds of men: but, like Bel and Nebo, they have tottered and fallen. They seemed to be established beyond all hope of confutation and overthrow, and yet they have passed away! If you are at all readers of the history of religious thought, you will know that systems of philosophy, and philosophical religions, have come up, and have been generally accepted as indisputable, and have done serious injury to true religion for a time; and yet they have vanished like the mirage of the desert. When at their best, they have withered: the grass has flowered, the flower has come to its full, and has fallen beneath the scythe. The gourds have come up in a night, and have perished in a night. Even those of us who are not aged, yet remember two or three different forms of philosophical divinity which preceded this new dreaming, which is just now so loudly cried up. Many modern thoughts have come up, and have gone down again. Bel has bowed down, and Nebo has stooped. The boastful "thinkers" carried up their elaborate systems into their places with great labour, and then they carried them away again, and buried them with equal labour. What philosophers prove one year, philosophers disprove another year. We, old-fashioned Christians, have remained unchanged in our fidelity to revealed truth, and we have seen Bel go up and Bel go down, and Nebo go up and Nebo go down. Yes, we have seen rubbish venerated as a precious thing, and anon the precious thing carted away as so much lumber. Like a child's merry-go-round at a fair, heresy is a revolution of the old things over and over again; yet people think it new. The present idols of the mind are just as worthless as those of former times. The god of modern thought is a monkey. If those who believed in evolution said their prayers rightly, they would begin them with, "Our Father, which art up a tree." Did they not all come from a monkey, according to their own statement? They came by "development," from the

basest of material, and they do not belie their original. If you are not well acquainted with this new gospel, I would not advise you to be acquainted with it; it is a sheer, clear waste of time to know anything about it at all. The moderns are able to believe anything except their Bibles. They credulously receive any statement, so long as it is not in the Scriptures; but if it is founded on Scripture, they are, of course, prepared to doubt and quibble and cavil straight away. The credulity of the new theologians is as amazing as their scepticism. But we shall see the monkey-god go down yet, and evolution will be ridiculed as it deserves to be. The philosophy of the present, whose aim is to get rid of God, has nothing to support it in fact or in nature. It will fly as chaff before the wind, and in fifty years nobody will own that he ever thought of believing it. The new religion will be regarded as a craze, an emanation from Bedlam; and every man will be ashamed to think that he stopped to hear or read anything about it. So idiotic is it from beginning to end, that it will become a standing jest for ages to come, a proverb and a byword to mankind. Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth already; and, as the Lord Jehovah liveth, the whole of this thing, which has been so cunningly and carefully devised to dethrone him, and cast down his gospel, shall be had in derision. These new gods, newly come up, shall not deliver themselves, or their worshippers, any more than did the idols of Babylon.

But now, beloved, it will be just the same with us if we trust in *false confidences* of any sort; such, for instance, as our experiences, or our attainments, or our services, or our orthodox belief, or aught else.

If we set up any confidences apart from our God, we shall soon see the end of them. Imagine that any Christian here should be so foolish as to rely upon his own works. God forbid we should! But what an airy nothing our confidence would be! Before long that Bel would bow down, and that Nebo would stoop, for the hope would be too flimsy to bear the least weight. Or, if we should begin to rely upon our own enjoyments—if frames and feelings should become our confidence—all would come down, and our boast would become our burden, our glory our shame. "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth": sooner or later this will be the end of all false trusts. Placing confidence in our inward feelings is like building upon a bog, or leaning upon a rush, or feeding upon wind. The idols of our feeling are like the mud-gods of India—they are utterly worthless, and they turn to mere clay almost as soon as they are formed. If in our daily life we look to an arm of flesh, or practise self-reliance instead of God-reliance, or if we trust to friends instead of leaning upon the one great Invisible, we shall yet learn with tears the terror of that sentence, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth": anything that you make your confidence, instead of God, will fail to bear your burden, and will itself become a burden to you. Instead of its carrying you, you will have to carry *it*. Instead of its taking your load, it will increase your load, and become at last an intolerable curse. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Beloved in the Lord, think not that this is an unnecessary warning even for you, for you may as easily set up an idol in your heart as other men may set up a false system of philosophy, or an idol god.

Guard against setting up a rival trust to rob the Lord of even a small part of your confidence. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." None but Jesus is the ground of salvation: none but the Eternal God is the disposer of providence. Trust thou wholly in him who loves to be trusted. Let us lean upon our God with all our weight, and lean nowhere else; for if we put our confidence elsewhere, our idolatry will come home to us, and we shall hear the voice of disappointment, wailing bitterly, "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together."

II. Let that stand as the black cloud on which God will paint his bright rainbow, while I notice in the second place, that OUR GOD ABIDES ALWAYS THE SAME.

"Even to your old age I am he." He is always the same in himself, and always the same to his people. If you are indeed a believer in the Lord, and resting in Christ Jesus, he says to you at this time with regard to all the future unknown, and, perhaps greatly dreaded, "Be not afraid, for I am the Lord your God; even to your old age I am he."

Dear friends, we rightly expect *trials* between here and heaven; and the ordinary wear and tear of life, even if life should not be clouded by an extreme trial, will gradually wear us out. We shall come, by-and-by, if life be spared, to that bottom of the hill where the eye grows dim, and the ear is heavy, and the arms are trembling, and the strong men bow themselves. Well, what then? What saith our God concerning the days of decline and decay? He says to us, "I AM HE." He will not grow weak. His eye will not be dim. His ear will not be heavy. His arm will not be shortened that he cannot help us, nor his hand palsied that he cannot deliver us. Change is written across the countenance of every mortal, but there are no furrows on the brow of the Eternal.

If life should flow never so smoothly, yet there are *the rapids of old age*, and the broken waters of infirmity, and the cataract of disease; and these we are apt to dread; but why? Is not the Lord our trust? Is it not sure that the Lord changes not? Make this your strong confidence. As for you, ye youths, ye are strong, but boast not of your strength; the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song. As for you in the midst of life—tremble not because of your difficulties; "is anything too hard for the Lord?" As for you that are sinking into the decline of life, and know that very soon your tabernacle will be taken down, be not afraid, for the Lord has not altered. Hath he not said, "I am the Lord, I change not"? Let this be your delight.

In the course of years, not only do we change, but *our circumstances change*. Many look forward to trying circumstances in the declining days of life. "When I cannot earn my livelihood; when I cannot go out to the farm, or stand at the counter, or work on the bench, what will become of me then?" Hearken, my brother, if you are where you ought to be, your confidence is in God *now*, and you will have the same God *then*, and he will still be your guardian and provider. He will be under no decay from age, nor decline from weakness. His bank will not break, nor his treasury fail. His

granary will not be exhausted, and his bounty will not be worn out. Trust in him for that which is written between the folded leaves of destiny, as well as for the page which lies open before you. If the infirmities of the body scare you, trust him; and if the changing circumstances of your life alarm you, trust him; for *he* must be the same though heaven and earth should be dissolved. He says, "Even to your old age I am he."

"Ah!" say you, "but what I most mourn is *the death of friends*." Yes; that calamity is a daily sorrow to men who are getting into years. A new-made grave is with us every day. How many of those whom I dearly loved are now with God? When we near sixty, or pass onward towards seventy, we lament the multitude of dear friends that have fallen like the innumerable leaves of autumn. Some of us have now more friends in heaven than we have on earth. The best are going, still going: the messengers with heavy tidings follow close upon each other's heels. One of these days we think that some friend will cry, "I only am left." Ah, yes! But the Lord says, "I AM HE," as much as to say, "I am left to you, and will not fail you." Jehovah dies not, but still abides the same. If you have only viewed your friends as loans from him, but himself as your ultimate confidence, then you have acted wisely. When your friends are gone, you have not lost the source of all your strength, and help, and comfort; wherefore, be not afraid, for the Lord saith, "Even to your old age I am he."

Some trouble themselves more than there is need concerning *prophetic crises* which are threatened. One would think from their perpetual alarms that the prophets wrote to afflict us rather than to comfort us. "Oh, what shall I do," says one, "if there should be wars and rumours of wars, and earthquakes in divers places, and so forth?" What would you wish to do but trust in the Lord even as you do now? I know some good people who are much distressed with political prospects, with the evident tokens of social disorder, with the increasing tendency to break up everything, and with the stealthy progress of the superstition of Rome. Well, you may sit and look out of your windows till you see nothing but clouds and darkness, for fancy and fear together can fashion out of clouds monsters, and portents, and alarms. We know so little of the future that to worry about it will be the height of unwisdom. Our view of the near future may be incorrect; why fret over that which will never happen? Certainly, we only see part of the Lord's ways; and if we could see the whole we should most probably rejoice where now we grieve. Why, then, are we cast down? The Lord himself says to us, "Even to your old age I am he." In our days of palsy Jehovah trembles not. The Lord took care of the world before we were here to help him, and he will do it just as well when we are gone. We can leave politics, religion, trade, morals, and everything else with him. What we have to do is to obey him, and trust him, and rejoice in him, and go on our way rejoicing. He knows the end from the beginning, and will not allow the flood of human iniquity to swell beyond the control of his supreme will. His purpose shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Not even to the extent of the small dust of the balance shall the event vary from the decree, or the decree vary from the rule of unmingled love.

"Still," says one, "there are such *evil tokens in the Church itself* as must cause serious apprehension to godly men." Yes, I know it. I have had to know it to my personal sorrow. The Church grows old: grey hairs are upon her here and there, and she knoweth it not. But never despair of the Church of God, for of her it is true, "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you; to your old age I am he." The Head of the Church never alters. His choice of his Church is not reversed. His purpose for his Church is not shaken. The Holy Ghost, as indwelling in the Church, has not returned to his rest: once given, he still abides in his Church, and works mightily. Beloved, fear not. We shall see better days and brighter times yet, if we have but faith in God and importunity in prayer. Let us not be afraid, though clouds should come, for it is written, "Behold he cometh with clouds." God is the same; there is the corner-stone of our comfort.

If you are depending upon anything or any person beside your God, woe unto you! "Oh," say you, "I used to hear a dear old minister in my early days; but I find none like him now. He has gone home; and I feel as if I could cry, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!'" I could make some of you weep if I were to go through the list of those holy men who fed you with food convenient for you in your younger days. Their very names are like music to our ear, and honey in our mouth. Remember Joseph Irons, and Harrington Evans, and Watts Wilkinson, and Rowland Hill, and men of that order. Where are the teachers and fathers now? But then the point is, the God of these saints is not dead. The Great Shepherd of Israel still lives, and he leads us still, and feeds us still, and guards us still; and he will guard his flock, and guide his flock, till he makes us to lie down in the green pastures on the hill-tops of glory. Oh, let us bless and praise his name to-night, that he gives us this rich comfort, "I am he." Jehovah, eternally the same, is the rock of our salvation.

III. And now, thirdly, I want to call your attention, in the words before us, to the fact that, while false confidences pass away, GOD WILL FOR EVER BE THE SAME. His former mercies guarantee to us future mercies. Read the passage before us: he says, "I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

First, you see, he says, "*I have made.*" The Lord, who is your helper, is he that created you: you certainly could not have created yourself. It is well to remember the mercy of God to us in our formation, and in the first days of our birth and infancy. David was not ashamed to say to his God, "Thou art he that took me out of the womb." The Lord gave us birth, or we had never seen the light. When we were born, we could not help ourselves in the least degree. Poor helpless, shiftless creatures, all we could do was to cry! We shall never again be so weak as we were at our birth. Great decrepitude may fall upon us, but we shall never be so little, so feeble, so puling, so dependent, as we were when we could not speak, and make known our wants, except by a cry. We were entirely dependent upon others for everything, we were quite helpless, and yet we survived. We did not starve then; yet for years we never earned a crust. We did not

want for clothing then; and yet we could not have fingered a needle if we had been offered a thousand pounds. We were taken care of then, and surely God will take care of us for all the rest of our lives. We have been nursed through our first childhood, and we shall be nurtured through our second childhood, should it come upon us. We know very little indeed about those first three or four years, yet the Lord fed us, and led us, and here we are in proof of it. Wherefore, when he says, "I have made," he takes us back to those early days, and makes us feel that he that made us to grow, and gave us one by one the powers of manhood, will not leave us to moulder away in old age, nor to break up like a wreck upon the rocks of disease.

But think, beloved! God made us in another sense. He new-made us. Blessed is the man that has been twice born, and thus twice made! The Lord God has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus. He has made us to be his children: we have been "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." If he has done all this, he does not intend to leave us till he has finished the work of grace with power. A statue thinks nothing of the man that made it; but the man who has fashioned a thing of beauty of that sort takes a great interest in his handiwork. You that are made do not take such interest in your Maker as your Maker takes in you. "I have made," saith he, "I have made." What he has done to you, in making you anew, should breathe into your heart the conviction that he will do yet more for you. That is, if there is a true heart in the world, God made it, and thinks of it: if there is a true church in the world, God made it, and keeps it. Every church that is a church in the Scriptural sense, God has gathered to himself; and of it he says, "I have made." He called the people out, and knit them together, and built them up as a house for himself to dwell in. If he has made either heart or church, he will keep it: he will not forsake the work of his own hands. He has used both thought and skill, and has exercised both power and care for it, and he will not desert that which has cost him dear. God's past mercy in the making of us encourages us to believe that he will put forth all his might to bear us on even to the end.

And then, he also tells us, in the next place, that *he has carried us;* and if we have been carried by him, he will carry us the rest of the way. There is a quaint saying of Bishop Hall, that God has a very large family, and not one of his children can run alone. In a certain sense, that is true. You know what an armful you have when you have two or three children that cannot run alone. What a great care has our gracious God, since none of his children can run alone without his power, his love, his grace! The Lord has to carry every one of us every moment of our lives. The beginning of a Christian's life is very like the latter part of it! As to the natural man, we begin with being carried, and if we live long enough, we have to end with being carried. So, with the spiritual man, we begin with a simple trust; and as we grow in grace, we feel more and more our own weakness, and come a second time to a trust as simple as at first. But whether we have one childhood or fifty childhoods, here is a Father who is ready

to carry us, from the first even to the last. "I have made, and I will bear; even to hoar hairs will I carry you." Of this I am convinced, God will not begin to make and carry us, and then leave the work unfinished. It shall never be said of him that he began to build, and was not able to finish. God will not redeem us with the blood of his Son, and then lose us; he will not suffer Calvary to become a mistake, and the Cross to be frustrated in its divine purpose. God will not prepare us for heaven, and prepare heaven for us, and not bring us there. He will not store up the blessings of the covenant, and then refuse to bestow them, or cast off those for whom they were provided. He who hath begun a good work in us will carry it on, and perfect it unto the day of Christ. The past guarantees the future, since we have to do with a God who can never change.

But I must not linger on any point, as our time flies; I must notice next that, *practically*, *God's mercies through life are always the same*. If you will look at the text carefully, you will not fail to see that it is so. God may be said to begin in regeneration the work which we experience from his hands—therein he *makes* us. But all through life he is still making us. We are perpetually revolving on the wheel; and he is continually fashioning us. He has not yet perfected in us the image of Christ. He has only to keep on doing what he has been doing, and we shall be perfected. His first work in us was resurrection work; and is he not daily quickening us, constantly raising us from the dead? It was new creation, and he is daily creating us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. No new form of mercy is ever wanted; all we need is the old mercy repeated, and adapted to our case. My dear friend, you will never want anything of God but what you have already had. The grace that saves the young man will save the old man. The patience that bore with your follies in youth will bear with your weakness in age. Depend upon it, you will require nothing but what you have already received the like. In this matter, the thing that has been, is the thing that shall be, and there is nothing new under the sun.

As for this "*carrying*" of which the text speaks, assuredly that is no new thing. As I have already said, the Lord carried us in our infancy. Our first spiritual blessing came of our being carried: we were sheep going astray, and the Shepherd came after us; and, when he found us, he carried us upon his shoulders rejoicing, and brought us home. After that we were lambs in the fold, and he gathered the lambs in his bosom, and carried us. Many a rough place have I encountered in my life's pilgrimage, and I have wondered how I should ever get over it; but I have been carried over the rocky way so happily that the passage has made one of the most charming memories of my heart. I begin to like rough places, even as Rutherford fell in love with the cross he had to carry. When the road is smooth, I have to walk; but when it is very rough, I am carried. Therefore, I feel somewhat like the little boy I saw the other night. His father had been carrying him up-hill; but when he reached a piece of level road, the boy was a great lump to carry, and his father set him down, and let him walk. Then the little gentleman began to pull at his father's coat, and I heard him say, "Carry me, father! Carry me, father. Carry me

again!" Just so. Any sensible child of God will still say, "Carry me, father! Carry me still, I pray thee!" The father's answer is, "I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry you." Therefore call upon him, and ask that when the road is rough, or miry, he will carry you; and he will carry you.

The promise closes with the words, "*And I will deliver you.*" That is no new mercy. Have you not been delivered many times already? "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine"—so David trusted, and so do we. Oh, the deliverances of God's people! Time out of mind he hath appeared for us. "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength!" We have overcome through the power of the Lord, and have escaped even from between the jaws of death. Still he will save us in life, and when we come to die he will deliver us gloriously. It will only be the same mercy again—a repetition of the covenant guardianship in another form. See how Paul puts it, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." See! it is a note from the same trumpet, a voice from the same mouth. Wherefore, beloved, as you will only want the same mercy repeated, be confident, be joyful. Do not dread to-morrow. Do not fear next year. Do not pine because of the coming of old age. Do not dread that painful operation which seems needful. Do not dread even death itself. He that made you will make you to endure; he that has carried you, will carry you; he that has delivered you will deliver you to the end. If it were possible, when we get to heaven, one of the things that we should do would be to sit down and laugh at our fears. Surely we should laugh and cry too. Shall we not say, "How could I ever doubt my God? How could I ever have mistrusted my faithful Lord? Here I am, after all, sitting among the thrones of the glorified! Why did I doubt my God?" That poor old woman in the almshouse, that poor man who was bedridden, how different they will be, and how they will wonder that ever they were so timorous! Hear the sick one say, "I feared I should perish in my trouble; but here I am, as bright and glorious, as alert and nimble, as any of them." Hear the poor man from his cottage shouting, "Hallelujah! I will sing aloud unto the Lord all the more because of the weakness and the poverty through which I have triumphantly passed." Blessed be God, we only want a continuance of the same mercy as we have already experienced, and that the Lord promises to us.

And now, to close, notice in the text *two things which are always here—the same God and the same mercy.* There is nobody else here but the Lord alone with his people. Will you note that? There is nobody else here but you and your God; and you are nobody, but a poor thing that has to be carried. "Even to your old age *I* am he. Even to hoar hairs will *I* carry you. *I* have made, and *I* will bear; even *I* will carry, and will deliver you." We have great admiration of angels, but we are very pleased to see that they are not mentioned in this promise. We have many kind-hearted friends, but we are glad to see that they are not brought in here. God's great *I*,

and that alone, fills up the whole space. And oh, what a blessing it is when we trust in the Lord alone! Look ye, beloved, when ye were made, it was God that made you; when you were new-made it was God that new-made you. It was *his* grace, *his* power, *his* love, *his* wisdom, *his* life. Nobody else was there. Up to this time, he alone has carried you, and no other hand has sustained you. He has always been sufficient for the task, to bear you, and your own weight, and your divinely appointed burden. The Lord has borne you up, and he has borne you through, and he has borne you on. He has borne you to this day. He alone has done it. Do you not think that he can do it in the future? His own right hand and his holy arm have hitherto gotten him the victory; can you not trust him for to-morrow? He alone has delivered you, and he alone can repeat the deliverance. You have been, perhaps, as I have often been, in a cleft-stick, where nobody could tell you how to get out, but yet the Lord found a way of escape for you. You were shut up, and you could not come forth, and then God cleared the way in a moment. What a great Maker of ways is the Lord God! His way has been in the sea, and his path through the deep waters; and there have you rejoiced in him. He alone dried up the sea and made a path for his chosen; but ten thousand hands could not have done it better. God alone is greater than a whole universe of creatures.

Come, brethren, let us hear the voice of our experience. O ye who have known the Lord and his grace, trust your God, the lonely champion of the righteous, the sole Saviour of the sinner, the all-sufficient deliverer of those that cast themselves upon him.

You young people, oh, how earnestly I wish that you would begin with my Lord Jesus Christ—begin with the great and blessed Father, and trust him, for he will take care of you to hoar hairs! What may happen between your youth and your age I cannot tell. You may never see old age. I cannot look into the palm of your hand and read your destiny; but come and trust my Lord, and all will be right, for your destiny will be in his hand for time and for eternity. You in middle life, with your children about you, and hard times to struggle with; your God whom you trusted in your youth will not leave you now. All between your birth and your death the God of our Lord Jesus guarantees; and he promises to remember your seed after you. Trust him. Play the man. Do not mistrust your heavenly Father. Doubt yourself as much as you like, but do not distrust the Lord who cannot lie. Did you come here with a heavy heart to-night? Leave the heaviness behind. Many a time a friend has come in on a Thursday evening, I mean a friend who does not generally worship here on the Sabbath; he has come in from the Exchange, or from the shop, having been a heavy loser in the day, and he has found such rest of mind at this service that he has been no more sad, but has gone home nerved for the conflict. How often friends have sent in help for different works because of the encouragement they have had while listening to the preaching of the Word here! By faith they have been delivered, and they have offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord God. O my brothers, do trust my God! Do not let the world say, God's own people cannot trust him!" Surely they will

think that he is not to be depended on if *you* begin to doubt him. Trust him as he deserves to be trusted, and rest in him with all your souls.

"Trust him, ye saints, in all your ways,
Pour out your hearts before his face;
When helpers fail, and foes invade,
God is our all-sufficient aid."

And you, my aged brethren and sisters, to whom I speak with much reverence, show to us who are younger where your joy and your peace are, that we also may rest in God. He has brought you through seventy years of trial! Do you think that he will now forsake you? You are eighty, you say, or even getting on to ninety. Well, you have at least eighty reasons why you should not distrust your God and Saviour. If you will read your own diaries you will see that there are eighty million reasons why you should trust him, and yet you cannot find one solitary reason why you should not do so. Wherefore, "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him," and may he bless you evermore, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah xlvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—732, 193, 745.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,—Although we have had two days of rainy and tempestuous weather, I have improved so greatly that I feel like the man who is described in Scripture as "walking, and leaping, and praising God." As I cannot quite manage the two former exercises, I desire to be doubly abundant in the third. Watts says,

"When we are raised from deep distress,
Our God demands a song;
We take the pattern of our praise
From Hezekiah's tongue."

That man of God, on his recovery, said, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day." In that spirit I have prepared the sermon to which this note is appended; and I have borne therein my willing testimony to the faithfulness of God, and to the certainty that he honours the faith of his people.

From the Tabernacle I have joyful news of a meeting at which four or five hundred persons came together to confess that they had found mercy during the late services. What a cordial to one's heart! "Therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord." Blessed be his name!

With my heart's best wishes for all my hearers and readers,

Their servant for Christ's sake,

Mentone, Dec. 1, 1888. C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LORD'S OWN SALVATION.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 16TH, 1888

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, August 2nd, 1888.

"But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."—Hosea i. 7.

GOD *is very considerate towards the messengers by whom he delivers his word to men.* They are bound to deliver his word faithfully, whatever the tidings may be. Sometimes the burden of the Lord is very heavy. The prophets have to denounce woe upon woe, with terrible monotony of threatening; and then it is that God hastens to relieve them by giving them a gracious word, so that they may refresh their hearts, and not be altogether crushed beneath their load. We have an instance here of the Lord's care for his heralds. Hosea was bound to say, in the name of the Lord, "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away"; but when he had said *that*, with heavy heart and tearful eye, he was allowed to add, "But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah." The Lord will not let our spirit fail beneath a burden which is all of grief; but he will grant us the high privilege of proclaiming grace, as well as publishing judgment. Dear brethren in Christ, if you have to preach God's word, preach it faithfully, and abate no syllable of its stern threatenings. Woe unto him who is afraid to preach the terrors of the Lord! Woe unto the man who refuses to put his hand into the bitter box, and take out the wormwood and gall which make such salutary medicine for the souls of men! We must at times speak lightning, and prove ourselves sons of thunder. We must bring on the storm and tempest in the heart of man, if fair summertide discoursing will not touch them. For the most of men there is no going to heaven except by Weeping Cross; and we must drive them that way with God's thundering sentences of judgment. Let us lead them by the path of sorrow to the Man of sorrows, sorrowing ourselves because it is so hard to bring them to a godly sorrow. It is at our soul's peril that we allow a warning to lie silent. "If the watchman warn them not,

they shall perish; but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." Let us think of that, and give ourselves up to our Master's work, even when it is heaviest, cheered by the fact that we have to speak of such glorious truths, such precious promises, such a gracious Christ, such a free salvation, such full pardon for the very chief of sinners, such abundant help for those that have no strength, such fatherly compassion to those that are out of the way. Our themes of joy by far outweigh our topics of grief, and we find the Lord's service a happy one.

The connection of our text suggests the thought that *there is a limit to the long-suffering of God.* He bade Hosea say, "I will no more have mercy upon Israel." He had borne with that guilty people very long, and overlooked their daring crimes; but he would do so no longer: he would give them over to the enemy, who would carry them quite away, so that Israel as a distinct monarchy should cease to be. O my hearers, God is very gracious, but his Spirit shall not always strive with you. A little more sin, and you may be over the boundary, and God may give you up. Stay, I pray you! Do not further provoke. Repent, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart.

Having made that observation, I would make another, namely, that *the Lord makes distinctions among guilty men according to the sovereignty of his grace.* "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will have mercy upon the house of Judah." Had not Judah sinned too? Might not the Lord have given up Judah also! Indeed he might justly have done so, but he delighteth in mercy. Many sin, and righteously bring upon themselves the punishment due to sin: they believe not in Christ, and die in their sins. But God has mercy, according to the greatness of his heart, upon multitudes who could not be saved on any other footing but that of undeserved mercy. Claiming his royal right he says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." The prerogative of mercy is vested in the sovereignty of God: that prerogative he exercises. He gives where he pleases, and he has a right to do so, since none have any claim upon him. We are all under his rule, and by that rule we are under condemnation; and if he should leave us there, it would be strictly just; but if any be saved it is an act of pure, undeserved grace, for which he is to have all the praise.

Note, too, that even in the darkest times, when whole nations go astray from him, *he still reserves unto himself a people.* "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them." God will have a people even when those who are called his people prove unworthy of the name. There never was a night so dark but that God had a star shining through its blackness. There never was a desert so drear but God could lead a people through it, and make the wilderness rejoice. There never shall be a time in which Christ will not have a remnant according to the election of grace, who will maintain his truth and the honour of his name. Let us be comforted by this, and look for brighter and better times, however dark the days may seem to be just now. God will save his own, and by his own will keep his glory bright among men.

But now the text brings us to consider this fact, that *God will save his own people in his own way.* He tells us positively how he will save the house of Judah, and negatively how he will not save them. "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." God displays his sovereignty not only in the persons saved, but in the ways whereby that salvation is wrought out.

The point which we shall consider is God's way of saving his people, as instanced in the text; and we remark, first, *that oftentimes God puts visible means aside in dealing with his people:* "Not by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." Secondly, he has *good reasons for doing this:* he acts with infinite wisdom. Thirdly, *there is a gospel in this,* a gospel which has special relation to us. Oh, for a blessing from the Spirit of the Lord!

I. First, then, GOD IS PLEASED VERY OFTEN, IN WORKING SALVATION, TO PUT MEANS ASIDE. He said of Israel, "I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." He thus struck out of the hands of his people their only defence; they had trusted in their bow, and the Lord destroyed it.

First, *the Lord does this in the work of salvation by grace.* Salvation is of the Lord alone. Salvation is not of human merit, for there is no such thing. Plenty of demerit you can find anywhere and everywhere, but of merit there is none. "When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants: we have done no more than it was our duty to have done." But we have not done all. Alas! on the contrary, we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and we have left undone the things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us. In ourselves we have neither health, help, nor hope. We are not, we cannot be, saved by our works. We dismiss the idea with an honest indignation, each one of us for himself. Neither are we saved by any good dispositions which lie dormant and latent within us, for there are no such things. There is none good, no not one. The heart is, in every case, deceitful, and desperately wicked. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. If our salvation depended upon our hearts going after God of themselves, and the motions of our nature ascending towards the Most High of themselves, it would be a hopeless case. But divine grace waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men. When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." The first movement is from God to us, not from us to God. As soon expect the darkness to create the day as expect the sinner to turn his own heart to the Lord. We are saved by the Lord's grace, not by our works, nor by our feelings, nor by our desires, nor even by our sense of need. I believe it is one object of God's infinite wisdom in each individual case to make this doctrine clear to the understanding and the heart. Certainly it is one object of every faithful ministry. We preach down the creature, and preach up the Saviour. Yet, preach as we may, self-righteousness is so natural to man, self-trust is so congenial to our proud imbecility, that we cannot get it out of men

till the Holy Spirit comes. Every man his own Saviour is the kind of doctrine which is popular; but to set aside our own doings is to offend many. I see before me a picture which was once before the mind of Isaiah. Our nature seems like a rainbow-coloured field of grass in the early days of summer. The golden kingcups are intermingled with flowers of every hue. What a luxuriant garden! Wait a moment! A wind comes—a hot sirocco burns its deadly way. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass." So have we seen men glorious in their own self-righteousness, boastful of their moral purity and we have half thought, surely there is something in all this! We walk over the same field after the withering work of the Holy Ghost has been there, and men have been convinced of sin, and we see nothing but disappointment, and hear nothing but confession of failure. We see no flowers, but dead, withered grass. How soon has the glory departed! The comeliness of the field is passed away as in the twinkling of an eye!

You cannot have forgotten, some of you, when this terrible self-withering happened to you. When God's rebukes corrected you, your beauty passed away as the moth. Before I was instructed as to myself I thought myself as good a fellow as could be found within fifty miles; but when the Spirit of God had revealed me to myself, I thought myself the basest creature within five hundred miles; or, for the matter of that, even outside or inside of hell itself. You may, perhaps, have seen a picture drawn by a cunning artist. It represents a lady, very fair and beautiful to look upon; but the picture is so contrived that you discover underneath it the form of death. That which appeared outwardly so lovely is only a veiled skeleton. Just that kind of change the Spirit of God makes upon our moral beauty: he turns it into corruption by making us see what we really are. The bones of the skeleton of depraved nature stand out through the proud flesh of our self-righteous pride. Then we cry to God for mercy. Then we give up all idea of saving ourselves. Neither bow, nor sword, nor horse, nor horsemen, are any longer our confidence. The weapons of our self-help are looked upon by us as weapons of rebellion—and they really are so; and we throw them away, and will have nothing further to do with them. The man upon whom there is found a bad coin is very earnest in declaring that it is none of his, somebody must have slipped it into his pocket. He will not own it. A little while ago he thought to himself, "What a splendid imitation it is! How well I have cheated the Queen!" Self-righteousness is nothing but a piece of counterfeit coin; and when all goes well with us, we say, "How well I have done it! How splendid is my righteousness!" But when the Spirit of God arrests us, then we are anxious to get rid of the very thing wherein we gloried. What was our righteousness we reckon to be as filthy rags—and we reckon according to truth. Thus God saves us, not by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen, but by his grace, which comes to us freely when Jesus is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

It is so in the actual salvation of men, and *it is often so in their*

calling to this salvation. Was any man ever converted in the way in which he expected to be? I hardly think so. I know what you thought would happen; at least I know what many expect. They look for an interesting incident. They suppose, perhaps, that they will have a very wonderful dream; or that, going to hear a minister, there will be something very striking in the sermon which will alarm or depress them, so that they will be tempted to commit suicide, or do some other outrageous thing. Possibly, on the other hand, they half expect that there will happen a sudden death in the family, or sickness upon many, and that so they will be impressed; or, possibly, like Martin Luther with his friend Alexis, they may be walking out in a thunder-storm, and Alexis will be killed, and they will be aroused in that way. I, myself, always looked for something very remarkable, but it did not come to me. And yet something happened which was more remarkable than the most remarkable thing would have been: I simply heard the gospel command, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." I looked and I lived; and that is all the story I have to tell you. Dear hearer, that is all the story, very likely, you will ever have to tell. You have come in here to-night, and perhaps you have even desired that something very wonderful may take place. Nothing of the sort may happen, and yet the infinite mercy of God may visit your heart and sweetly melt it. Or ever you are aware, you may say to yourself—

> "I do believe, I will believe,
> That Jesus died for me";

and, on a sudden, that change will come over you of which you have so often heard—by no means the physical change which you have looked for, the extravagant delirium of sorrow struggling with delight. You will simply drop into the arms of Christ, and rest in his great sacrifice, and find peace. That will be all. You will not be saved by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen, but by a simple trust in the Lord alone. What more do you want? What more can you hope to receive?

I feel very grateful to God whenever a person attributes his conversion to me. I feel both honoured and humbled. But if you are brought to the Lerd Jesus, and no word of mine shall be used, but only that still small voice which speaks in solemn silence to the heart, I shall be equally pleased, so long as you are saved. If hungry souls receive the bread of heaven, I will not fret because they took it from some other hand than mine. Oh, that even now the Lord himself might come like the dew which falls in its own special way, and may he refresh your hearts unto eternal life, and fulfil this word: "I will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."

In the next place, the same thing is true with regard to *the progress of religion, and the work of revivals.* Let every man work as he feels called to do, provided he follows the rules of his Lord; but we have seen revivals of which it was said at the first, "We will get up a revival." Revivals can be got up, but are they worth the trouble? What has been the end of them all? A few years after, the result, where is it? I hear an echo say, "Where is it?" I cannot tell you what

has become of it; in many cases I fear that the disappointed church has become more hard to stir than it was before. Brethren, I hopefully believe that there will soon come a deep, widespread, lasting revival of religion, and it may be it will come just as it used to in apostolic times. How did they act in Jerusalem? What did they do throughout Asia Minor? What was the apostles' plan? I cannot find, for the life of me, that they did anything else but preach the gospel, while at the same time they went from house to house, and held meetings for prayer; and thus the kingdom of Christ came. They did not work up a revival, but they prayed it down. They simply waited upon the Lord in supplication and service. They might have tried other plans had they been so unwise as to think of them. They would never have tolerated the dodges of the present period, the adaptations of the gospel, and the degrading of it, by secular lectures, entertainments, and so forth. They never dreamed of keeping abreast of the times with liberal philosophical teaching; but I recollect that Paul was so resolutely ignorant as to say, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Standing all together the chosen preachers of the first days could aver—"We preach Christ crucified." They could all say *that*, and say it emphatically. All the men of the college of the apostles stuck to that theme; and see the effect!

> "Nations, the learned and the rude,
> Were by these heavenly arms subdued,
> While Satan raging at his loss,
> Abhorred the doctrine of the cross."

I wish all the churches would try this old way again, for it seems to me that the world will never be subdued to Christ by the wooden sword of reason, but only by the true Jerusalem blade of a gospel revealed from heaven. Until we take up such methods as our Lord has ordained, and make our sole confidence to be in the Lord our God, who "will not save by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen," we shall never see great results. Grand preaching, fine preaching, eloquent preaching! Yes; but the apostle was afraid of it, lest the faith of his converts should stand in the wisdom of men. Though he could have spoken with the tongue of an orator, he did not use the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be of none effect.

"But, surely," cries one, "we must have some advancement in theology. We ought to know more than our old fathers did." This is the pride of our hearts. Would you advance beyond the apostles? Into what can you advance but into the ditch of error? They did not crave for an advance in the apostolic times; but they were satisfied to speak over again "all the words of this life." They remained true to the "faith once for all delivered to the saints," and they found salvation in this primitive revelation. Why should we go gadding elsewhere? Depend upon it God will not save men by advanced thought, nor by eloquent discoursings, nor by literary beauties: he "will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."

I believe that the same great truth will be made apparent *as to the establishment of the truth of God in this land.* How my soul has been burdened with the many that have turned aside, and the few that remain faithful to the covenant God of Israel! These last are not so very few as some would make them out to be, but yet they are sadly scant in number. God has reserved unto himself seven thousand that have not bowed their knee to Baal. Oh, that there were a thousand times as many! But we have striven with all our might to bear our outspoken testimony for the old faith, and we have hopefully thought, that many would rally to the cry; but it is not so, nor, perhaps, is it God's mind that it should be. Men of eminence have held their tongues, and brethren once ardent for the gospel have practically gone over to the enemy. I am sure that the Lord will confound the adversary, and bring forth his truth as the noonday; but it may not be as we would suggest. He has his own way; let us watch for him to make bare his arm. Perhaps those who are faithful must stand alone, must bear their witness in solitary places, and be the objects of general derision. Perhaps for many a year the heavenly fire will only smoulder amidst the ashes. But it is all right; truth shall hold the crown of the causeway yet, and Christ's own word shall lift its head from the waves that have washed over it, and be the fairer for the washing; for the truth hath God's might with it, and it must prevail. He "will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." We must be content to subside; to be nothing; to be never heard of; to die. So be it if the truth shall live. This will be better than if we formed a numerous band, and carried everything by majorities, and set up a strong party, and won the day: for then man might be great, and God be forgotten, but now he shall be all in all. When you have seen how I fail, and those that are with me, and how plans and efforts are futile, you will all the more clearly see what the Lord can do.

Dear friends, I would make one other application of these words, and I trust it may be profitable to you. *The text has a voice to God's people in the day of trouble.* I may be addressing godly people who are in most terrible distress. You have faith in God that he will bring you out of your affliction. Maintain that faith; and if for a long time no deliverance should come, still maintain it. Perhaps you have hopes from a certain quarter. Those hopes may come to nothing: that cistern will leak. You have another friend to whom you can apply. Yes, you can apply; that is all that will happen, for that tank also holds no water. When you have tried all the cisterns, be wise enough to recollect the fountain. It may be that there will come a day when every door will be fast closed, and you will see no way of relief whatever; but bethink you that then there will remain the one way, which you should have followed at the first. In such an hour let my text speak with you: "He will save them by the Lord their God, and he will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." What a glorious vision is that of Jehovah alone with his own right hand getting to himself the victory! When Israel came out of Egypt, what armies vanquished

Pharaoh? Who fought on Israel's side to bring them out of Egypt? Nobody. Then there was no human victor to extol, no human warrior to praise; but clear and plain the hymn rang out—"Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." If there had been an ally with God the glory might have been divided; but as it was, the Lord alone was exalted in that day. When Israel fought with Amalek it is evident that the battle never depended upon their fighting, for—

> "While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
> Success was found on Israel's side;
> But when through weariness they failed,
> That moment Amalek prevailed!"

so that the real fighting was done by those uplifted hands that brought down the divine success, and made Joshua mighty in the battle. When Israel crossed the Jordan, and came into the promised land to fight the Canaanites, the very first conquest was that of Jericho. Did they bring battering-rams to the walls? Did they gradually throw down the structure with their axes and picks? Oh, no! they compassed the city seven days, and God made the walls to fall when the people gave a shout. In the memorable deliverances of God's people, God has said to the second cause, "Stand back; let my glory come to the front." The bow, the sword, the battle, the horses, and the horsemen, he has sent them all about their business; and then the Lord their God has led the van, and his enemies have been scattered like the dust of the threshing-floor. When he takes up the quarrel of his covenant he makes short work of it, for "the Lord is a man of war; Jehovah is his name;" and when he lays bare his arm to defend the cause of his people, he wants no helpers. Now can you lean on the Lord? Can you grasp the Invisible? Can you lean *alone* on God, and forego all helpers? Can you grasp his bared arm, and let all things else go? O man of God, if thou canst, thou shalt glorify God, and thou shalt surely be delivered! If thou must have thy bow and thy sword, or else give up hope, then the battle rests with thyself. How canst thou plead the promise of God? But when thou puttest the bow aside, and the sword is hung on the wall, then canst thou go to him who is better to thee than bow and sword, and rest in him, and he will work gloriously, so that his own name shall be magnified, and thou shalt be blessed. I pray the Holy Spirit to apply that truth to any heart here that is heavy by reason of sore conflict at this time. Oh, for grace to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him, for in his own time and way he will work, and none shall hinder him.

So much upon our first point, that oftentimes God puts the means aside in dealing with his people.

II. But now, secondly, God has GOOD REASONS FOR THIS. I shall very briefly touch upon this theme. The Lord is full of wisdom, and his doings are ever prudent. He always has good reasons for everything, but one of the things we should never do is, to ask his reasons. It is an unreasonable thing to ask God to give reasons for what he does. His answer to arrogant questioners is—"May I not do as I will with my own?" Oh for grace to be silent where God is silent! Is he not God, and we worms of the dust? Who shall presume

to ask him why or what he does? Better far to say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." If he never gave us a reason for what he did, we ought to be well content to leave all with him, knowing that he must do that which is best and wisest.

But, so far as in humility we may dare to look, we have looked, and we believe that the Lord's ways are intended, first, *to prevent all boasting*. How prone we are to self-esteem! How wickedly we rob God to honour ourselves! If God uses *us*—if God uses any sort of means—yet there is no credit to the means which he uses, but to himself only. I read the other day of a certain writer who says, "I wrote the four hundred pages of this book with one pen." Where is that pen? Does anybody want it? If it were advertised as an exhibition, I should not go to see it. I care a deal more for the hand that wrote, and for what was written, than for the pen with which it was written. A common goose-quill it was in the case referred to, and no more. Ah, how plainly can we see where the quill came from! God uses men for a certain purpose, as we use a hammer, or a saw, or a gimlet. Suppose that when we had done with such tools, and put them back into the box, they all began to cry, "See what we have done! What a sharp saw I was! What a heavy hammer I was! Did I not hit the nail on the head?" Such boastings would be foolishness. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? We do not judge that the instrument ought to take credit to itself; but it does so in our case whenever it can, and this is a great injury to us. Some of us might have enjoyed a much larger blessing, if we had not grown top-heavy with the blessing we already enjoyed. God saved a soul or two by you, my dear friend, and you began to rub your hands, and think that you were something better than an angel. You were running away with God's glory, and thus ending your own influence. Often this is the cause of the drying up of hopeful usefulness. The instrument began to exalt itself, and so the Lord put up the bow, the sword, the horses, and the horsemen, and then all men saw what powerless things these were. Oh, that the Lord may never feel compelled to leave you and me to ourselves! Oh, that he may deign to honour us by using us to his glory. I had far rather die than stand a withered tree in the vineyard of the Lord, and yet, what better should I be if he withdrew the dew of his grace from me?

Next, he does this *to take us off from all reliance upon second causes and outward means*. You people of God, the process of weaning is, with you, full often a long and tedious one; but if ever it is accomplished, your faith will rejoice, even as Abraham made a great feast at Isaac's weaning.

My dear hearers, some of you are not saved yet, and I will tell you what happens with many of you. You come here on Sabbath days, and to Monday prayer-meetings, and Thursday services, and I am glad to see you. You also read your Bibles; I am glad of that. You say a thing you call a prayer: I do not know whether I am glad about *that*. But I will tell you what you are doing. You are making yourselves quite comfortable, as if, by some singular process, salvation would insensibly penetrate you by your being found in good company, hearing the Word, and so on. Let me remind you that

these things were never prescribed as the way of salvation. I do not want you to run away from hearing the Word, or from the use of the means; but I do want to assure you that, if you trust in these means, you will be disappointed in the result. These are mere pitchers, but they will not quench your thirst if there is no water in them. Look to God, not to your minister. Get to Jesus himself rather than to the sacred Book. Remember how the Saviour puts it—for this is not a wrested reading—"Ye search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: but ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Pass beyond the Scriptures to the Christ whom the Scriptures reveal. Do not stay in the porch of the Word, but enter the house of the truth itself, which is Christ Jesus. It is not singing hymns and saying prayers; it is getting to the Lord in praise and really coming to Christ in prayer. I wish you not to stay away from any of the services; I wish you to be where the means may be blessed to you; but the means of themselves cannot save you. There is nothing in preaching—there is nothing in public service that can mechanically bring salvation to you; and do not expect it. "Ye must be born again!" You must distinctly go to Christ for yourselves, for the Lord saves men by the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will not save them by books, and prayer-meetings, and sermons any more than he would save Judah by the bow, the sword, the battle, the horses, and the horsemen. The Lord set aside horse and horsemen to bring the people to himself; and often he lays people up so that they cannot get out to hear the minister, or he drafts them away to some portion of the country where they get no sermon, that then they may go to the God of all true sermons, and may find salvation in Jesus Christ himself.

Again, beloved, the Lord blesses his people himself *that he may endear himself to them.* He reveals himself to them apart from other things, that they may see *him* and know what *he* can do. You do not know to the full what God can do so long as he keeps within the bounds of the ordinary means, or you feel that you are well provided for by ordinary methods. You are apt to forget that *God* provides for you, because your quarterly allowance is received so regularly. Now, suppose that your business fails. Ah! then God must provide for you: then you will see what God is doing. Suppose that, instead of being in one place, you should be kicked about like a football, and still the Lord should give you rest in himself: then you will see what he can do. When we are in fine feather, and everybody is kind to us, we hardly know the lovingkindness of the Lord, it is so smothered up by secondary agencies. When we get quite alone, and nobody is kind to us, and we approach to the Lord in solitary trust, and prove his power to comfort us, then we know more of what he is in himself to his people. The night reveals the stars, and sorrow and loneliness manifest the Lord's presence. But, beloved, God does this to endear himself to us, that seeing more of him we may love him more, and may say to ourselves, "What a gracious God he is to take notice of me, to interpose for me, to come and, by his own mighty power, do for me what the ordinary ways and means fail to do!" In this way also the Lord often gives a double blessing—a blessing in the gift, and a blessing in the way of giving.

Now look at Hezekiah's case. Supposing Hezekiah had gone out to fight Sennacherib, and had defeated him, a certain number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have been killed in the battle; but when the Lord delivered Hezekiah without a battle, then there were no funerals in Jerusalem. Nobody was wounded; nobody was slain. So frequently God not only blesses us by the favour given, but by the way in which the gift is sent: he saves us from pains which any other method would have involved. The Lord often spares us the humiliation of being dependent upon a person who would have made his patronage bitter to us. If we had received the blessing through some great one, he might have crowed over us all the rest of his life. I like that bit in Abraham's life when the king of Sodom offered him the property which he had captured. Abraham had a right to it, for he had taken it in war; but he said, "I will not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." No, no; the servant of the Lord would not have a king talk as if he had been the maker of the Lord's own servant. God himself will so help you, so bless you, so carry you through, that you shall not have to take off your hat to any king of Sodom, neither shall he be able to go up and down the city and say, "I have made Abram rich." God will put the king of Sodom away with the horses and the horsemen, and double the mercy to you by handing it out with his own hand after his own way.

I think that the Lord does this also *to encourage you in all future troubles:* he has rescued you in a way beyond means, without means, and even against means, and therefore you cannot be in a condition from which he will be unable to rescue you. If you should come to be more friendless and more feeble than you now are—what then? Are your resources within yourself or dependent upon friends? If so, you are in an evil case. But if all your supplies are in the Lord, you are no worse off than you used to be. When the Lord strips you bare of your own garments, then you can go to his wardrobe and put on the raiment which he has provided. You cannot wear God's clothes while you glory that you are wearing your own. When want has swept your table, then all the bread on it will come from your God. When the Lord has brought you down to the bare rock, then you can go no lower, and there is a chance to build a house which will stand against flood and wind. Be reliant upon him who can work by means, but can equally well work without means whenever it seemeth good in his sight! In such confidence you will find security against all ill weathers. The Lord changes not, and therefore you shall not be consumed.

III. My time is done, or else I was going to say, thirdly, THERE IS A GOSPEL IN THIS TEXT for those here present. I can only hint at this in a few words.

The first gospel is that *salvation is possible in every case.* Notice, "I will save them." What can stand against a divine "I will"? With God nothing is impossible. If there be nothing to help him, what does it matter? He does not need help. He expressly abjures the aid of a creature when he says, "I will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." My dear hearer, whoever

you may be, there is hope in your case: if God saves, then you can be saved. If you had to save yourself, you would not be saved; but as there is nothing wanted of you, but God worketh salvation with his own right hand, your case is hopeful. How clear is this! And how bright with comfort!

Next, *salvation is to be sought of God alone.* Do not go wandering about to the second cause. Go straight to the Lord himself, and go at once. Straightforward is the best running in the world. Go straightforward to your God, your Saviour. Let there be no waiting for tears, feelings, repentance, sanctification, or anything else; but arise at once, and go to your God, and for Christ's sake plead with him to have mercy upon you at this moment. As salvation does not necessarily come through the outward means, if I address any here who have neglected the outward means, let them come away to God at once, though they have neglected his courts, profaned his day, and despised his ministers. You came in here with no idea of worshipping God, but only just to see the place, and what the preacher is like. Never mind, look to the Lord Jesus Christ straight away! With these eyes that are so blinded, look! If you cannot see, it may be that in your obedient attempt to look, the Lord will give you sight. He does not command you to *see*, but he does command you to *look* to him and be saved: so that, if you turn your eyes towards Jesus, though they be sightless eyeballs, he will make them see. If you will trust in Christ you may cast your guilty soul on him at this moment. Why should you not do so? Then for you the rain will be over and gone, and you will see the bright light in the clouds. Instead of the dark and dismal winter of doubt, you shall have a summer-time of hope and comfort. These dreary weeks of cold despair shall give place to a season in which heaven and earth shall blend in your experience in a joy unspeakable. The Lord grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Chronicles xxxii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—103 (Version I.), 138, 211.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,—I am still somewhat like Mephibosheth, who "did eat continually at the king's table, and was lame on both his feet"; but the fine summer weather of this place, and the complete rest, are rapidly restoring me. I ask prayer that strength may return in such a way as to remain with me, that I may, for a long period afterwards, abide in my work; as also that the divine blessing may rest on the preaching of the Word.

I have great cause for gratitude because of the continual items of news which I receive concerning the influence of the sermons. This is a rare restorative. May my readers still find in these simple discourses food for their souls, and comfort for their hearts. When they distribute them among the unsaved, may the Spirit of God make them to minister life to the spiritually dead.

I am most happy in being remembered in the prayers of many saints; and I would beg for more intercession, not for myself only, but for all who truly preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Yours ever heartily,

Mentone, Dec. 8th, 1888. C. H. SPURGEON

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"EYES RIGHT."

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 23RD, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, July 14th, 1887.

"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."—Proverbs iv. 25.

THESE words occur in a passage wherein the wise man exhorts us to take care of all parts of our nature, which he indicates by members of the body. "Keep thy *heart*," says he, "with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward *mouth*, and perverse *lips* put far from thee. Let thine *eyes* look right on, and let thine *eyelids* look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy *feet*, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy *foot* from evil." It is clear that every part of our nature needs to be carefully watched, lest in any way it should become the cause of sin. Any one member or faculty is readily able to defile all the rest, and therefore every part must be guarded with care. We have selected for our meditation the verse which deals with the eye. These windows of light need to be watched in their incomings, lest that which we take into our soul should be darkness rather than light; and they need to be watched in their outgoings, lest the glances of the eye should be full of iniquity, or should suggest foolish thoughts. Hence the wise man advises, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Have eyes and use them. Using them, take care to use them honestly.

Some persons are always as if they were asleep. They go through the world mooning about, seeing nothing, or seeing men as if they were trees, with a sight which is not sight, but blindness hidden. The shadows of this transient life impress them, and that is all: they have never awakened yet to the true life and its solemn realities. They have never seen anything in very truth; for it is faith that sees, and of faith they have none. That which is apart from faith is not visible to the soul, however clear it may be to the eye. We have thousands around us who need to be startled out of that slumber in which they

see the fabrics of their dreams, and the unsubstantial fancies of the hour. They say, "We see," but scales are on their eyes. I fear we have such in all our congregations, lulled to sleep even by the preacher's tones, to whom the fact of coming to their accustomed seat, and listening to the usual hymns, tends rather to confirm them in a sluggard's slumber than to stir their souls to action. O ye sluggards, may God awaken you by grace, lest he arouse you by the thunderbolts of his vengeance! It is time that your eyes began to look right on, and your eyelids straight before you.

Many others are somewhat awake mentally, but they are not looking right on, neither do their eyelids look straight before them. They are staring about them, star-gazing, wondering what will be seen next: always ready, like the Athenians, to hear and see some new thing. They move, it is true, but it is in a labyrinth which leads to nothing, in a circle which ends where it began; they toil and slave, but it is all in the shadow land: of substantial work they do nothing. An active idleness, a diligent laziness, is all that their life is made up of; for, as yet, they have no purpose—no purpose worth being the aim of an immortal soul. An arrow will never strike the mark if it travels in a zigzag direction; and the man whose life has no aim whatever, who pursues this, and then that, and then the other, what will he achieve? Are not many like "dumb driven cattle," going they know not where? They have never yet discovered that this life is a preface to a life of diviner mould. They do not regard the present as the lowly porch of the glorious edifice of the future. They have not thought that time is but the doorstep of eternity, a thing of small account, save that it is linked with the endless ages; and so they seek after this, and then after that, and then after the other; and always after that which is too poor, too trifling to be the object of a mind capable of fellowship with God. How many there are whose spirit is agitated by a mere nothing, resembling

"Ocean into tempest tost
To waft a feather or to drown a fly"!

To beings who lead such purposeless lives we would address the words of the wise man, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Have something to do, and do it. Have something to live for, and live for it. Get to know the right way, and, knowing the right way, keep to it with full purpose of heart and concentration of faculty. O man, see whither thou art going, and go that way, with thine eyes open, resolutely marking every step as thou takest it. Look where thou oughtest to look, and then follow thine eyes, which shall thus be useful outriders to thy life, and help to make thy way safe and wise. When thou hast sent thine eyes before thee to make sure of the way, it will be safe to follow. Look before you leap, and only leap when looking bids you do so.

If a man is to let his eyes look right on, and his eyelids straight before him, then *he is to have a way, and that way is to be a straight way*, and in that straight way he is to persevere. You cannot see to the end of a crooked way. You can only see a small part of a way that twists and winds. Choose, then, a direct path which has an end which you dare think of and look upon. Some men's lives are such that they

dare not think of what the end of them must be. They would not long pursue their present track if they were forced to gaze into that dread abyss, which is the only possible close of an evil course. The way of transgressors is hard in itself, but it is hardest of all when we behold their dreadful end. "Surely thou hast set them in slippery places. Thou castest them down into destruction." You need to have a way, and a straight way, and a way whose end you dare contemplate, or else you cannot carry out the advice of Solomon, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."

Every wise man will conclude that *the best way for a man is the way which God has made for him.* He that made us knows what he made us for, and he knows by what means we may best arrive at that end. According to divine teaching, as gracious as it is certain, we learn that the way of eternal life is Jesus Christ. Christ himself says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"; and he that would pursue life after a right fashion must look to Jesus, and must continue looking unto Jesus, not only as the author, but as the finisher of his faith. It shall be to him a golden rule of life, when he has chosen Christ to be his way, to let his eyes look right on, and his eyelids straight before him. He need not be afraid to contemplate the end of that way, for the end of the way of Christ is life and glory with Christ for ever. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." A friend said to me the other day, "How happy are we to know that whatever happens to us in this life it is well!" "Yes," I added, "and to know that if this life ends it is equally well, or better." Then we joined hands in common joy to think that we were equally ready for life or death, and did not need five minutes' anxiety as to whether it should be the one or the other. Brethren, when you are on the King's highway, and that way is a perfectly straight one, you may go ahead without fear, and sing on the road.

With all my heart I invite any who have never yet begun to live after a right fashion, to take Christ to be the way of life to them; and then I entreat them to let their eyes look straight on, and their eyelids straight before them, and to follow Jesus without giving a glance either to the right hand or to the left till it shall be said of them, even in glory, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

I. I shall make my earnest appeals to the heart and conscience by beginning with this first exhortation: LET CHRIST BE YOUR WAY. You that are young, let him be your way from your youth. You that have hitherto gone the wrong road until your hairs have grown grey in the service of iniquity, turn, I beseech you, and take to the way of salvation. May his Spirit turn you, and you will be turned, then will Jesus become your way from henceforth.

If Christ be your way, you will begin first to seek *to have Christ.* "How shall I have him?" says one. Dost thou desire him? Wilt thou accept him? He is thine. The act of accepting Christ secures Christ to us; for the Father freely gives him to all who freely accept him. Some are troubled through ignorant and unbelieving fears, and are saying, "I wish I could lay hold on Jesus! I wish I knew that Christ

was mine!" Art thou willing to have him? Who made thee willing? Dost thou desire him? Who made thee desire him? Who but the Spirit of the Lord? Wilt thou now take Jesus to be thy Saviour, to save thee from thy sin? Then depend on it he is thine. There was never any difficulty with him to give himself to thee; the difficulty was to bring thee to receive him; and now that thou dost receive him, remember this—"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Jesus himself has said it, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"; and therefore, since thou comest, thou shalt never be cast out. Jesus has accepted thee, for thou hast accepted him. But I pray you, none of you rest until you have Christ. Let your eyes look right on, and your eyelids straight before you, till you find him. Look nowhere else but to him and after him. Shut yourself up in your room: determine not to come out again until you have him, and it shall not be long before you find him. Concentrating all your gaze upon the Crucified, light shall come from him, causing the scales to fall from your eyes, and you shall see him, even you that could not see; and you shall cry in delight, "He is mine, he is mine." Remember how David said to his son, "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." Think of the words of the prophet, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

When you have Christ, the next business of your life must be *to know Christ*. Seek to know more of him, to know him better, to know him more practically, to know him more assuredly. "That I may know him," said the apostle, after he had been a believer in him for fifteen years. That same man of God speaks of "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," even his knowledge, which was of the fullest sort; so that he meant to go on learning more and more of Christ, and he did not count himself to have attained. Christian men and women, you do not know your great Master yet. Here have some of us been nearly forty years in his service, and yet we could not describe him to our own satisfaction. Why, we hardly know the power of the hem of his garment yet. We have not descended far down into the mines of his perfections. How little know we of our hidden wealth in Christ Jesus! Oh, that we studied Scripture more, that we were more teachable, and waited more humbly upon the Lord for the light of his Spirit from day to day! Well says our singer—

> "Hoard up his sacred word,
> And feed thereon and grow;
> Go on to seek to know the Lord,
> And practise what you know."

In this matter let your eyes look right on, and your eyelids straight before you. Other men may have their pursuits, this is yours; stick to it earnestly. The science of a crucified Saviour shines like the moon in the midst of the stars as compared with all the other sciences which men may know; study it with your whole power of mind and heart. The angels on the mercy-seat of the ark stood always looking downward, and bending over. Hence the apostle says, "Which things the angels desire to look into"; and if *they* desire to look into the ark of the covenant and its sacred mysteries, how much more should we!

When you come to know somewhat of what he is, then go on *to obey Christ*. Is there anything that he has bidden you do? Do it. Some Christians have never yet been baptized: how will they answer for wilful neglect of a known duty? Others have been Christians for years, and yet have never communed at the Lord's table. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Do they keep his commandments? It was his dying request, "This do in remembrance of me," and yet they will not fulfil it. Even such a tender request they slight, as though it were of no importance whatever, as if their Lord was a mere nobody whose wishes might well be overlooked. What shall I say of many of the biddings of our holy gospel, many of those sweet precepts which are to be used in the family, and in the business, and in the field? What forgetfulness there is of them! What refusings to follow Christ! He might come to us and say, "If I be a Master, where is mine honour?" Truly, it ought to be one of the first thoughts of a Christian to find out the Lord's will; and when he knows it, obedience should follow immediately. His eyes should look right on, and his eyelids straight before him. What said the blessed virgin to those who were at the feast? Note the words, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." It was well spoken of the favoured mother, and it remains as a golden precept for us all—"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Make no reserve, exercise no choice, but obey his command. When you know what he commands, do not hesitate, question, or try to avoid it, but "do it": do it at once, do it heartily, do it cheerfully, do it to the full. It is but a little thing that, as our Lord has bought us with the price of his own blood, we should be his servants. The apostles frequently call themselves the bond-slaves of Christ. Where our Authorized Version softly puts it "servant" it really is "bond-slave." The early saints delighted to count themselves Christ's absolute property, bought by him, owned by him, and wholly at his disposal. Paul even went so far as to rejoice that he had the marks of his Master's brand on him, and he cries, "Let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." There was the end of all debate: he was the Lord's, and the marks of the scourges, the rods, and the stones were the broad-arrow of the King which marked Paul's body as the property of Jesus, the Lord. Now, if the saints of old time gloried in obeying Christ, I pray that you and I, forgetting the sect to which we may belong, or even the nation of which we form a part, may feel that our first object in life is to obey our Lord, and not to follow a human leader, or to promote a religious or political party. This one thing we mean to do, and so follow the advice of Solomon, as he says, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Beloved, let us endeavour to be obedient in the minute as well as in the greater matters, for it is in details that true obedience is best seen. Let us copy the faintest touches in the life of our great Exemplar.

That being attended to, remember, if Christ be your way, you have further to seek *to be like him*, not only to do as he did, but to be as he was; for "as he was, so are we in this world." What a man *does* is important, but what a man *is* is all-important. The ring of the metal is something, but if its ring could be imitated by a base coin, it would

be nothing. It is, after all, the substance of the metal that decides its value. O man, what art thou? If thou be a twice-born man, thou art a partaker of the nature of Christ; but if not, thou art under the curse which cleaves to the old nature as leprosy cleaves to the leper. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"; and we must begin to bear that heavenly image even now. As born again into the headship of the Second Adam, we should seek to be as much like the Second Adam as we are already by nature like the first Adam, through our first birth. The second birth should be as operative to produce the image of the second Adam, as the first was to produce the image of the first Adam. Alas! "the earthy" is impressed upon us very distinctly; we cannot spend an hour without discovering the clear stamp of nature's die. Oh, that "the heavenly" could be quite as clearly discerned! This, therefore, we must aim at, though as yet we have not attained it. Here is something to be thought of very carefully, and I charge you, by the Holy Ghost, let your eyes look right on, and your eyelids straight before you, that you may be transformed from glory to glory into the image of the Lord. God grant that it may be so with every one of us!

Now, supposing that we have attended to all this, if Christ is our way, and our model, there is something more, namely, that we seek *to glorify Christ*, and labour to win others to him. Here is a grand field for all our energies. O Christian people, what are we left in this world for, except to bring others to Jesus? Are we not left in this wilderness that we may find out more of the good Shepherd's stray sheep, and work for him and with him to bring them in. I fear we forget this. Are not some of you indifferent as to whether your fellow-men are lost or saved? Have not some of you, in your families, come to this pass—that you see your brother an infidel, your sister frivolous, your parents godless, and yet it does not fret you? I think that if I had a godless relative, it would break my night's rest, not now and then, but always. A brother, a father, a child unsaved! What mean ye by taking your ease? If the spirit of Christ be in us, the tears that fell from the eyes of Jesus will find their like upon our cheeks. We shall weep day and night because men are not gathered unto eternal life. Nor will this be a loss to us, for blessed are the mourners in Zion. Blessed are they that mourn because others abide in sin and reject the Lord!

Now, concerning the salvation of our fellow-men; we shall never compass it unless our eyes look right on, and our eyelids straight before us. Before we win souls, we must live for souls. We need men and women who live to convert others to Christ. The minister had better quit his pulpit if it be not his one burning desire to bring hearts to Jesus' feet. If a divine impulse be not upon him, driving him to seek the souls of men, let him go elsewhere with his windy periods. Professors have little right to be in Christ's church, unless they are passionately in earnest to increase his kingdom by the salvation of their fellow-men. O my brothers and sisters, on whom is the blood-mark of redemption, I charge you concerning this matter to "let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight

before you"! Seek souls as dogs hunt their game; eye, nostril, ear all open, and every muscle strained. Converts are not gained by dreamers. We cannot imitate Jesus as a Saviour of men by being dull and heartless. In any point in which we follow our Lord let us do it with all our soul.

Thus much upon the first point: let Christ be your way in all things, and keep to that way.

II. Following the text again, only working it a little differently, the second exhortation is, SET YOUR EYES ON HIM AS YOUR WAY. If Christ be your way, and you follow him to have him, to know him, to obey him, to be like him, and to glorify him, then set your eyes on him as the way. Think of him, consider him, study him, and in all things regard him as first and last to you.

First, *that you may know the way of life*, let your eyes be fixed on him. Soul, art thou in the dark? Kneel down and pray, and look Christward. Saint, art thou bewildered? Go by the way of the cross, the way of the Crucified, for that is the true and sure path. Sinner, art thou burdened? Wouldst thou be rid of thy burden? Run Christward. Any direction given thee to go anywhere else will misdirect thee. I say not to any one I meet to-night, "Go to the wicket-gate." Neither will I bid you look to any light within, and run that way. My only direction is, "Go to Jesus." You see that cross, and him who bled thereon! Stand still, and look that way, and your burden shall fall from your shoulders. Where Jesus died, you shall live. Where Christ was wounded, you shall be healed. "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you." Know the road; you will never know it too well: the more you know it the happier you will be in it. "To Christ!" "To Christ!" "To Christ!" That is the sole inscription upon every finger-post of the road to heaven. Keep you to the King's highway.

Since Christ is the way, let your eyes be fixed on him as the way *that you may follow him well*, may follow him wholly. Gather up all your faculties to go after your Lord. Be not like Lot's wife, who longed, and looked, and lingered, and was lost. Away, away, away from Sodom, altogether away: let no eye steal in that direction. Away, away, away to Christ, to Christ alone. All eyes must be for Jesus, who cries, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." As the ploughman looks to the end of the furrow, and keeps right on, even so must you look only to Jesus. What hast thou to do with anything but Christ, sinner? I tell thee that thou hast nothing even to do with thine own sins, but to lay them down at his feet. He is all; the beginning and the end. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."

Look alone to Jesus, and do this *to keep your spirits up*. Some men's eyes do not look right on, and their eyelids do not look straight before them, for they look back upon that part of the road which they have traversed, and grow content with that which they have already attained. They live in *retrospection*. When you begin to look back at what you have done, and rub your hands, and say with self-satisfaction, "I remember when I did right well," wisdom warns you that this is not the right kind of look. What have you to look back upon? Poor,

weak creature! Forget that which is behind, and press forward to something better and higher. When you sinful souls get looking back upon your past bad lives I am glad of that, but still I do not want even you to keep your eyes always in that direction. You will get no comfort in looking into the foul ditch of your own transgressions. Look, look, look before you! Look where the cross stands. Run that way. Let thine eyelids look straight before thee to the atoning sacrifice; away from the past, which he will graciously blot out, to Jesus only.

Some spend much of their time in what is called *introspection*. Now introspection, like retrospection, is a useful thing in a measure; but it can readily be overdone, and then it breeds morbid emotions, and creates despair. Some are always looking into their own feelings. A healthy man hardly knows whether he has a stomach, or a liver; it is your sickly man who grows more sickly by the study of his inward complaints. Too many wound themselves by studying themselves. Every morning they think of what they should feel: all day long they dwell upon what they are not feeling; and at night they make diligent search for what they have been feeling. It looks to me like shutting up your shop, and then living in the counting-house, taking account of what is not sold. Small profits will be made in this way. You may look a long while into an empty pocket before you find a sovereign, and you may look a long time into fallen nature before you find comfort. A man might as well try to find burning coals under the ice, as to find anything good in our poor human nature. When you look within, it should be to see with grief what the filthiness is; but to get rid of that filthiness you must look beyond yourself. I remember Mr. Moody saying that a looking-glass was a capital thing to show you the spots on your face; but you could not wash in a looking-glass. You want something very different when you would make your face clean. So let your eyes look right on—

> "To the full atonement made,
> To the utmost ransom paid."

Forget yourself, and think only of Christ.

Some not only unduly practise retrospection and introspection, but they carry much too far a sort of *circumspection*. They look all around them: they look upon their past, and their present, and their fears and their doubts, and from all these things they judge their condition, and decide their state of mind. You recollect Peter. He cried to his Lord, "Bid me come unto thee on the water." He receives permission. Down the side over the boat goes Peter. To his intense surprise he is standing on a wave. Peter had never done such a thing before in his life as walk on the water. He might have kept on standing on the wave, and he might have walked all the way to Jesus, if he had kept his eyes on his Master until he reached him. The waters would have borne him up as well as a granite pavement; but Peter began to look at the billows, and he listened to the howling of the wind, and then to the beating of his own heart; and down he went; and then he had to cry to his Master. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee": thou canst walk the waters

all the way to the golden shore, if thou canst but stop thine eyes to all things else.

Surely I may use the text as an illustration of that closing of the eyes. "Let thine eyes look right on." "I understand that," says one, "for I trust. But you cannot look with your eyelids." What can that mean? Remember that you can shut your eyes with your eyelids to a great many things, and so cease to see them; and in the matter of faith-sight a great many things are best not seen. So, when you would otherwise see the danger, and all the difficulties and the doubts, do not look with your eyes, but look with your eyelids. Not to look at the difficulties at all is all the look they deserve. Let your eyelids shut out the view which would create distrust. Do not see, do not feel, "only believe." Believe Christ, and believe nothing else. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." If all the sins thou hast ever done should come rolling up like Atlantic billows, and if all the devils in hell should come riding on the crests of those waves, howling as they come, take no notice of them. Christ has said, he that believeth in him hath everlasting life; believe thou in him, and thou hast the everlasting life as surely as Christ is the Christ of God. Draw down the blinds, and see nothing, know nothing, believe nothing but the living word of the living Saviour. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." When thou closest thine eyes to consider, thou canst see a good deal with closed eyes, but still look thou right on to the one and only trust.

You must also let your eyes look right on, dear friends; for *if you begin to look two ways at a time, you will miss the Lord Jesus, who is your way.* Under the Jewish law no man who had a squint was allowed to be a priest. He is described as one who had "a blemish in his eye." I wish they would make a similar law with regard to spiritual sight in preachers nowadays, for certain of them are sadly cross-eyed. When they preach free grace they squint fearfully towards free-will; and if they look to the atonement, they must needs see in it more of man than of Christ. See how they look to Moses and to Darwin; to revelation and to speculation! A great many people would fain be saved, but they squint: they look a little towards sin, and the flesh, and the world, and they make provision for personal gain, and personal ease. In this case they fail to see Christ's strait and narrow way of the denial of self, and the crucifixion of the flesh. If thou wouldst have salvation, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Look not a little this way, and a little that way, or thou wilt never run aright. "I could believe that I was a Christian," says one, "if I felt more happy. I could trust Christ if I felt my nature changed." That is a squint which ruins the faith-look. That is trying to look two ways at once. You cannot do it: it will ruin you. It would spoil the beauty of the sweetest countenance if we could use our eyes to look otherwise than straight on. We have some friends who, if they wish to see us, look over there, and yet we are not there. Avoid this spiritual blemish; it has no advantages—"Let thine eyes look right on." Look to Christ alone, to him as thy whole salvation. Have nothing to do with thy good works as a ground of trust, or thou art a lost man. I charge

thee, have nothing to do even with thy faith and thy repentance as a ground of trust. Trust not thy trust, but trust alone in what Christ has done. If thou shalt trust thy best feelings or thy worst feelings, thy prayers or thy praises, thy almsgivings or thy consecration in any degree, thou hast made an antichrist of them. Strip thyself of thy last rag, and let Christ clothe thee from top to toe. Be thou hungry unto famishing, and clean out the last crumb thou hast in the pantry, for then only wilt thou feed on Christ, the bread of life. Let him be both bread and wine, and make up the whole of a feast for thee. Thou shalt have salvation surely enough if this be what thou dost. But let not Jesus bring the bread, and carnal confidence the wine: take a whole Christ to be all thy salvation and all thy desire, and thy peace shall be unbroken. Let the Holy Spirit bring thee to that oneness of trust which makes both eyes meet at their proper focus, and let that focus be the Lord Jesus. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."

III. But my time has almost expired, and I have only to lay emphasis on one more matter. LET YOUR EYES DISTINCTLY AND DIRECTLY LOOK TO CHRIST ALONE. I have gone over this before, but I need to hammer at it again, in order to clench the nail. *Look not to any human guide*, but look to Christ Jesus alone. We have no faith in priests; but it is a very easy thing to fix your faith upon a minister, and hear what he says, and believe it because he says it. I charge you, believe nothing that I tell you if it cannot be supported by the Word of God. I am content to stand or to fall by this: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them." I will quote the authority of no other book, whoever may have composed it; no ancient book, let it belong even to the earliest days of the church. This one inspired volume is the text-book of our religion. Follow Holy Scripture, and you have an infallible chart. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the one apostle and high priest of our profession; follow him. Not even mother or father, or the brightest saint that ever lived, must divide you from your perfect Guide. "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you," and hear the gracious words of him who bought you with his blood as he cries, "Follow me."

Then, again, *look to Christ directly and distinctly for yourself.* I warn you against putting any trust in national religion, or in family and birthright godliness. A personal Christ must be laid hold of by a personal faith. You must yourself repent, yourself believe, yourself get a grip of him, and of none but him. You must use your own eyes: "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you."

Again, *look not to any secondary aims.* Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. In seeking Christ, make no bargain with gain or reputation; be content to lose all gold and all honour if you may but win Christ. To follow religion for pelf would be a mean act of hypocrisy, and to leave it for the same reason is equally vile. Let your eyes be fixed on following your Lord, and as to any worldly consequences, bring your eyelids into use, keep them fast closed, and go right on in implicit obedience to your Lord.

Forget all things else when seeking Christ, and when you have found Christ. It is no ill thing for a man, when he is under concern of soul, to let his business and everything go till he finds his Saviour. I urge no one to such a course, but I have noticed many converts who have done this who have soon found rest. If a captain were busy about the comfort of his passengers in their cabins, but all the while knew that there was a great leak in the ship, and it would soon go down, and to this he paid no heed whatever, you would say to him, "How foolish you are to mind the little, and neglect the great!" But if he told the passengers, "Breakfast cannot be prepared with our usual care, for all hands are pumping or repairing the vessel," you could not blame him when you knew that every man's help was needed to save the ship from going down. In times of extreme danger, secondary things must give place to the main thing. If this house were to take fire you would not stay to sing the last hymn, even if I gave it out. May the Holy Spirit lead some of you to feel that you must be saved! You must be saved, and therefore you must put other things into a second place. Remember how Bunyan pictures the man running for his life, and when his neighbours called to him to stop, he put his fingers in his ears, and as he ran he shouted, "Eternal life! Eternal life! Eternal life!" That man was a wise man. Imitate him; if you have not found eternal life, run for it, with your "eyes right on, and your eyelids straight before you."

And, lastly, *take care that you continue gazing upon Christ until you have faith in him.* "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Go on hearing the Word of God till faith come thereby. Do you ask me how faith comes? It is the gift of God, but it usually comes in a certain way. Thinking of Jesus, and meditating upon Jesus, will breed faith in Jesus. I was struck with what one said the other day of a certain preacher. The hearer was in deep concern of soul, and the minister preached a very pretty sermon indeed, decorated abundantly with word-painting. I scarcely know any brother who can paint so daintily as this good minister can; but this poor soul, under a sense of sin, said, "There was too much landscape, sir. I did not want landscape; I wanted salvation." Dear friend, never crave word-painting when you attend a sermon; but crave Christ. You must have Christ to be your own by faith, or you are a lost man. When I was seeking the Saviour I remember hearing a very good doctrinal sermon; but when it was over I longed to tell the minister that there was a poor lad there who wanted to know how he could be saved. How I wished he had given half a minute to that subject! Dr. Manton, who was usually a clear and full preacher of the gospel, when he preached before the Lord Mayor, gave his lordship something a cut above the common citizens, and so the poorer folk missed their portion. After he had done preaching his sermon, an aged woman cried, "Dr. Manton, I came here this morning under concern of soul, wanting a blessing, and I have not got it, for I could not understand you." The preacher meekly replied, "The Lord forgive me! I will not so offend again." He had overlooked the poor, and had thought mainly of my Lord Mayor. Special sermons before Mayors, and Queens, and assemblies are seldom worth a penny a thousand. The gospel

does not lend itself to show performances. I am not here to give you intellectual treats: my eyes look right on to your salvation. Oh that yours may look that way! Go after Christ, dear friend. Seek after Christ with your whole heart and soul. Feel that the one thing you must have is to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Keep on with that cry, "None but Christ: none but Christ." Make this your continual litany—

'Give me Christ, or else I die;
Give me Christ, or else I die."

Then you will soon find him. "Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you," and you shall see the Lord of grace appearing to you through the mist and through the cloud, that self-same Saviour who stands in the midst of us even now, and cries, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Proverbs iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—971, 999, 527.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED FRIENDS,—We are in our measure partaking in the change of weather which plunged England from an almost summer heat into cold and fog, for we have a cold wind blowing with a force which overpowers the warm sun. This has a depressing influence upon many invalids, but does not affect *me*. Each day I make a little progress. I could not yet stand through a discourse, much less walk a mile; but I can walk further than I could a week ago, and I am conscious of renewed vigour. I thank God that the swelling of the feet is also decreasing, and so I may look for complete restoration, and then for a speedy return to my happy work.

I hope and pray that this week's sermon may prove useful. Purposely I have made it striking and plain, with the design that it should be suitable for wide distribution. It contains the gospel in its simplicity, stated in a pleasant manner.

I have prepared three sermons, as a double number, to close the year with, and I hope they will be a fit top-stone to the thirty-fourth volume, which I am glad to have completed.

Receive my sincere love in Christ Jesus. May all grace abound towards you.

Yours till death,

Mentone, Dec. 13th, 1888. C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THREE DROPS OF HONEY FROM THE ROCK CHRIST.

THE MIRACLES OF OUR LORD'S DEATH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 1st, 1888.

"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."—Matthew xxvii. 50—53.

OUR Lord's death is a marvel set in a surrounding of marvels. It reminds one of a Kohinoor surrounded with a circle of gems. As the sun, in the midst of the planets which surround it, far outshines them all, so the death of Christ is more wonderful than the miracles which happened at the time. Yet, after having seen the sun, we take a pleasure in studying the planets, and so, after believing in the unique death of Christ, and putting our trust in him as the Crucified One, we find it a great pleasure to examine in detail those four planetary wonders mentioned in the text, which circle round the great sun of the death of our Lord himself.

Here they are: *the veil of the temple was rent in twain; the earth did quake; the rocks rent; the graves were opened.*

I. To begin with the first of these wonders. I cannot, to-night, enlarge. I have not the strength. I wish merely to suggest thoughts.

Consider THE RENT VEIL, or *mysteries laid open.* By the death of Christ the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the mysteries which had been concealed in the most holy place throughout many generations were laid open to the gaze of all believers. Beginning, as it were, at the top in the Deity of Christ, down to the lowest part of Christ's manhood, the veil was rent, and everything was discovered to every spiritual eye.

1. *This was the first miracle of Christ after death.* The first miracle of Christ in life was significant, and taught us much. He turned the water into wine, as if to show that he raised all common life to a

higher grade, and put into all truth a power and a sweetness, which could not have been there apart from him. But this first miracle of his after death stands above the first miracle of his life, because, if you will remember, that miracle was wrought in his presence. He was there, and turned the water into wine. But Jesus, as man, was not in the temple. That miracle was wrought in his absence, and it enhances its wonder. They are both equally miraculous, but there is a touch more striking about this second miracle—that he was not there to speak and make the veil rend in twain. His soul had gone from his body, and neither his body nor his soul was in that secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High; and yet, at a distance, his will sufficed to rend that thick veil of fine twined linen and cunning work.

The miracle of turning water into wine was wrought in a private house, amidst the family and such disciples as were friends of the family; but this marvel was wrought in the temple of God. There is a singular sacredness about it, because it was a deed of wonder done in that most awful and mysterious place, which was the centre of hallowed worship, and the abode of God. See! he dies, and at the very door of God's high sanctuary he rends the veil in twain. There is a solemnity about this miracle, as wrought before Jehovah, which I can hardly convey in speech, but which you will feel in your own souls.

Do not forget also that this was done by the Saviour after his death, and this sets the miracle in a very remarkable light. He rends the veil at the very instant of death. Jesus yielded up the ghost, and, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain. For thirty years he seems to have prepared himself for the first miracle of his life; he works his first miracle after death in the moment of expiring. As his soul departed from his body our blessed Lord at that same moment laid hold upon the great veil of his Father's symbolical house, and rent it in twain.

2. This first miracle after death stands in such a place that we cannot pass it by without grave thought. *It was very significant, as standing at the head of what I may call a new dispensation.* The miracle of turning water into wine begins his public life, and sets the key of it. This begins his work after death, and marks the tone of it. What does it mean?

Does it not mean that *the death of Christ is the revelation and explanation of secrets?* Vanish all the types and shadows of the ceremonial law;—vanish because fulfilled and explained in the death of Christ. The death of the Lord Jesus is the key of all true philosophy: God made flesh, dying for man—if that does not explain a mystery, it cannot be explained. If with this thread in your hand you cannot follow the labyrinth of human affairs, and learn the great purpose of God, then you cannot follow it at all. The death of Christ is the great veil-render, the great revealer of secrets.

It is also the great opener of entrances. There was no way into the holy place till Jesus, dying, rent the veil; the way into the most holy of all was not made manifest till he died. If you desire to approach God, the death of Christ is the way to him. If you want the nearest access and the closest communion that a creature can have with his God, behold, the sacrifice of Christ reveals the way to you. Jesus not only says, "I

am the way," but, rending the veil, he makes the way. The veil of his flesh being rent, the way to God is made most clear to every believing soul.

Moreover, *the cross is the clearing of all obstacles.* Christ by death rent the veil. Then between his people and heaven there remains no obstruction, or if there be any—if your fears invent an obstruction—the Christ who rent the veil continues still to rend it. He breaks the gates of brass, and cuts the bars of iron in sunder. Behold, in his death "the breaker is come up before them, and the Lord on the head of them." He has broken up and cleared the way, and all his chosen people may follow him up to the glorious throne of God.

This is significant of the spirit of the dispensation under which we now live. Obstacles are cleared; difficulties are solved; heaven is opened to all believers.

3. *It was a miracle worthy of Christ.* Stop a minute and adore your dying Lord. Does he with such a miracle signalize his death? Does it not prove his *immortality?* It is true he has bowed his head in death. Obedient to his Father's will, when he knows that the time has come for him to die, he bows his head in willing acquiescence; but at that moment when you call him dead, he rends the veil of the temple. Is there not immortality in him though he died?

And see what *power* he possessed. His hands are nailed; his side is about to be pierced. As he hangs there he cannot protect himself from the insults of the soldiery, but in his utmost weakness he is so strong that he rends the heavy veil of the temple from the top to the bottom.

Behold his *wisdom*, for in this moment, viewing the deed spiritually, he opens up to us all wisdom, and lays bare the secrets of God. The veil which Moses put upon his face Christ takes away in the moment of his death. The true Wisdom in his dying preaches his grandest sermon by tearing away that which hid the supremest truth from the gaze of all believing eyes.

Beloved, if Jesus does this for us in his death, surely, we shall be saved by his life. Jesus who died is yet alive, and we trust in him to lead us into "the holy places made without hands."

Before I pass on to the second wonder, I invite everyone here, who as yet does not know the Saviour, seriously to think upon the miracles which attended his death, and judge what sort of man he was who, for our sins, thus laid down his life. He was not suffered by the Father to die without a miracle to show that he had made a way for sinners to draw near to God.

II. Pass on now to the second wonder—"THE EARTH DID QUAKE." *The immovable was stirred by the death of Christ.* Christ did not touch the earth: he was uplifted from it on the tree. He was dying, but in the laying aside of his power, in the act of death, he made the earth beneath him, which we call "the solid globe," itself to quake. What did it teach?

Did it not mean, first, *the physical universe fore-feeling the last terrible shake of its doom?* The day will come when the Christ will appear upon the earth, and in due time all things that are shall be rolled up, like garments worn out, and put away. Once more will he speak,

and then will he shake not only the earth, but also heaven. The things which cannot be shaken will remain, but this earth is not one of them: it will be shaken out of its place. "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Nothing shall stand before him. He alone is. These other things do but seem to be; and before the terror of his face all men shall tremble, and heaven and earth shall flee away. So, when he died, earth seemed to anticipate its doom, and quaked in his presence. How will it quake when he that lives again shall come with all the glory of God! How will you quake, my hearer, if you should wake up in the next world without a Saviour! How will you tremble in that day when he shall come to judge the world in righteousness, and you shall have to face the Saviour whom you have despised! Think of it, I pray you.

Did not that miracle also mean this?—that *the spiritual world is to be moved by the cross of Christ.* He dies upon the cross and shakes the material world, as a prediction that that death of his would shake the world that lieth in the wicked one, and cause convulsions in the moral kingdom. Brothers, think of it. We say of ourselves, "How shall we ever move the world?" The apostles did not ask that question. They had confidence in the gospel which they preached. Those who heard them saw that confidence; and when they opened their mouths they said, "The men that have turned the world upside down have come hither unto us." The apostles believed in shaking the world with the simple preaching of the gospel. I entreat you to believe the same. It is a vast city this—this London. How can we ever affect it? China, Hindostan, Africa—these are immense regions. Will the cross of Christ tell upon them? Yes, my brethren, for it shook the earth, and it will yet shake the great masses of mankind. If we have but faith in it, and perseverance to keep on with the preaching of the Word, it is but a matter of time when the name of Jesus shall be known of all men, and when every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue confess that he is Christ, to the glory of God the Father. The earth did quake beneath the cross; and it shall again. The Lord God be praised for it.

That old world—how many years it had existed I cannot tell. The age of the world, from that beginning which is mentioned in the first verse of the Book of Genesis, we are not able to compute. However old it was, it had to shake when the Redeemer died. This carries us over another of our difficulties. The system of evil we have to deal with is so long-established, hoary, and reverent with antiquity, that we say to ourselves, "We cannot do much against old prejudices." But it was the old, old earth that quivered and quaked beneath the dying Christ, and it shall do so again. Magnificent systems, sustained by philosophy and poetry, will yet yield before what is called the comparatively new doctrine of the cross. Assuredly it is not new, but older than the earth itself. It is God's own gospel, everlasting and eternal. It will shake down the antique and the venerable, as surely as the Lord liveth; and I see the prophecy of this in the quaking of the earth beneath the cross.

It does seem impossible, does it not, that the mere preaching of Christ can do this? And hence certain men must link to the preaching

of Christ all the aids of music and architecture, and I know not what beside, till the cross of Christ is overlaid with human inventions, crushed and buried beneath the wisdom of man. But what was it that made the earth quake? Simply our Lord's death, and no addition of human power or wisdom. It seemed a very inadequate means to produce so great a result; but it was sufficient, for the "weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men"; and Christ, in his very death, suffices to make the earth quake beneath his cross. Come, let us be well content in the battle in which we are engaged, to use no weapon but the gospel, no battle-axe but the cross. Could we but believe it the old, old story is the only story that is needed to be told to reconcile man to God. Jesus died in the sinner's stead, the just for the unjust, a magnificent display of God's grace and justice in one single act. Could we but keep to this only, we should see the victory coming speedily to our conquering Lord.

I leave that second miracle; wherein you see the immovable stirred in the quaking of the earth.

III. Only a hint or two upon the third miracle—THE ROCKS RENT. I have been informed that, to this very day, there are at Jerusalem certain marks of rock-rending of the most unusual kind. Travellers have said that they are not such as are usually produced by earthquake, or any other cause. Upon that I will say but little; but it is a wonderful thing that, as Jesus died, as his soul was rent from his body, as the veil of the temple was rent in two, so the earth, the rocky part of it, the most solid structure of all, was rent in gulfs and chasms in a single moment. What does this miracle show us but this—*the insensible startled?* What! Could rocks feel? Yet they rent at the sight of Christ's death. Men's hearts did not respond to the agonizing cries of the dying Redeemer, but the rocks responded: the rocks were rent. He did not die for rocks; yet rocks were more tender than the hearts of men, for whom he shed his blood.

> "Of reason all things show some sign,
> But this unfeeling heart of mine,"

said the poet; and he spoke the truth. Rocks could rend, but yet some men's hearts are not rent by the sight of the cross. However, beloved, here is the point that I seem to see here—that obstinacy and *obduracy will be conquered* by the death of Christ. You may preach to a man about death, and he will not tremble at its certainty or solemnity; yet try him with it. You may preach to a man about hell, but he will harden his heart, like Pharaoh, against the judgment of the Lord; yet try him with it. All things that can move man should be used. But that which does affect the most obdurate and obstinate is the great love of God, so strangely seen in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will not stay to show you how it is, but I will remind you that it is so. It was this which, in the case of many of us, brought tears of repentance to our eyes, and led us to submit to the will of God. I know that it was so with me. I looked at a thousand things, and I did not relent; but when

> "I saw One hanging on a tree
> In agonies and blood,"

and dying there for me, then did I smite upon my breast, and I was in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. I am sure your own hearts confess that the great rock-render is the dying Saviour.

Well, now, as it is with you, so shall you find it with other men. When you have done your best, and have not succeeded, bring out this last hammer—the cross of Christ. I have often seen on pieces of cannon, in Latin words, this inscription, "The last argument of kings." That is to say, cannons are the last argument of kings. But the cross is the last argument of God. If a dying Saviour does not convert you, what will? If his bleeding wounds do not attract you to God, what will? If Jesus bears our sin in his own body on the tree, and puts it away, and if this does not bring you to God, with confession of your sin, and hatred of it, then there remains nothing more for you. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The cross is the rock-render. Brothers and sisters, go on teaching the love of the dying Son of God. Go on preaching Christ. You will tunnel the Alps of pride and the granite hills of prejudice with this. You shall find an entrance for Christ into the inmost hearts of men, though they be hard as adamant; and this will be by the preaching of the cross in the power of the Spirit.

IV. But now I close with the last miracle. These wonders accumulate, and they depend upon each other. The quaking earth produced, no doubt, the rending of the rocks; and the rending of the rocks aided in the fourth wonder. "THE GRAVES WERE OPENED." The graves opened, and *the dead revived.* That is our fourth head. It is the great consequence of the death of Christ. The graves were opened. Man is the only animal that cares about a sepulchre. Some persons fret about how they shall be buried. That is the last concern that ever would cross my mind. I feel persuaded that people will bury me out of hatred, or out of love, and especially out of love to themselves. We need not trouble about that. But man has often shown his pride by his tomb. That is a strange thing. To garland the gallows is a novelty, I think, not yet perpetrated; but to pile marble and choice statuary upon a tomb—what is it but to adorn a gibbet, or to show man's great grandeur where his littleness is alone apparent. Dust, ashes, rottenness, putridity, and then a statue, and all manner of fine things, to make you think that the creature that goes back to dust is, after all, a great one. Now, when Jesus died, *sepulchres were laid bare, and the dead were exposed:* what does this mean?

I think we have in this last miracle "the history of a man." There he lies dead—corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins. But what a beautiful sepulchre he lies in! He is a church-goer; he is a dissenter—whichever you please of the two; he is a very moral person; he is a gentleman; he is a citizen; he is Master of his Company; he will be Lord Mayor one day; he is so good—oh, he is so good! yet he has no grace in his heart, no Christ in his faith, no love to God. You see what a sepulchre he lies in—a dead soul in a gilded tomb. By his cross our Lord splits this sepulchre and destroys it. What are our merits worth in the presence of the cross? The death of Christ is the death of self-righteousness. Jesus' death is a superfluity if we can

save ourselves. If we are so good that we do not want the Saviour, why, then, did Jesus bleed his life away upon the tree? The cross breaks up the sepulchres of hypocrisy, formalism, and self-righteousness in which the spiritually dead are hidden away.

What next? *It opens the graves.* The earth springs apart. There lies the dead man: he is revealed to the light. The cross of Christ does that! The man is not yet made alive by grace, but he is discovered to himself. He knows that he lies in the grave of his sin. He has sufficient of the power of God upon him to make him lie, not like a corpse covered up with marble, but like a corpse from which the grave-digger has flung away the sods, and left it naked to the light of day. Oh, it is a grand thing when the cross thus opens the graves! You cannot convince men of sin except by the preaching of a crucified Saviour. The lance with which we reach the hearts of men is that same lance which pierced the Saviour's heart. We have to use the crucifixion as the means of crucifying self-righteousness, and making the man confess that he is dead in sin.

After the sepulchres had been broken up, and the graves had been opened, what followed next? *Life was imparted.* "Many of the bodies of the saints which slept arose." They had turned to dust; but when you have a miracle you may as well have a great one. I wonder that people, when they can believe one miracle, make any difficulty of another. Once introduce Omnipotence, and difficulties have ceased. So in this miracle. The bodies came together on a sudden, and there they were, complete and ready for the rising. What a wonderful thing is the implantation of life! I will not speak of it in a dead *man*, but I would speak of it in a dead *heart*. O God, send thy life into some dead heart at this moment while I speak! That which brings life into dead souls is the death of Jesus. While we behold the atonement, and view our Lord bleeding in our stead, the divine Spirit works upon the man, and life is breathed into him. He takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh that palpitates with a new life. This is the wondrous work of the cross: it is by the death of our Lord that regeneration comes to men. There were no new births if it were not for that one death. If Jesus had not died, we had remained dead. If he had not bowed his head, none of us could have lifted up our heads. If he had not there on the cross passed from among the living, we must have remained among the dead for ever and for ever.

Now pass on, and you will see that those persons who received life, in due time *quitted their graves.* It is written that they came out of their graves. Of course they did. What living men would wish to stay in their graves? And you, my dear hearers, if the Lord quickens you, will not stay in your graves. If you have been accustomed to strong drink, or to any other besetting sin, you will quit it; you will not feel any attachment to your sepulchre. If you have lived in ungodly company, and found amusement in questionable places, you will not stop in your graves. We shall not have need to come after you to lead you away from your old associations. You will be eager to get out of them. If any person here should be buried alive, and if he should be discovered in his coffin before he had breathed his last, I am sure that, if the sod were lifted, and the lid were taken off, he would

not need prayerful entreaties to come out of his grave. Far from it. Life loves not the prison of death. So may God grant that the dying Saviour may fetch you out of the graves in which you are still living; and, if he now quickens you, I am sure that the death of our Lord will make you reckon that if one died for all, then all died, and that he died for all, that they which live should not live henceforth unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again.

Which way did these people go after they had come out of their graves? We are told that "*they went into the holy city.*" Exactly so. And he that has felt the power of the cross may well make the best of his way to holiness. He will long to join himself with God's people; he will wish to go up to God's house, and to have fellowship with the thrice-holy God. I should not expect that quickened ones would go anywhere else. Every creature goes to its own company, the beast to its lair, and the bird to its nest; and the restored and regenerated man makes his way to the holy city. Does not the cross draw us to the church of God? I would not wish one to join the church from any motive that is not fetched from the five wounds and bleeding side of Jesus. We give ourselves first to Christ, and then to his people for his dear sake. It is the cross that does it.

> "Jesus dead upon the tree
> Achieves this wondrous victory."

We are told—to close this marvellous story—that they went into the Holy City "*and appeared unto many.*" That is, some of them who had been raised from the dead, I do not doubt, appeared unto their wives. What rapture as they saw again the beloved husband! It may be that some of them appeared to father and mother; and I doubt not that many a quickened mother or father would make the first appearance to their children. What does this teach us, but that, if the Lord's grace should raise us from the dead, we must take care to show it? Let us appear unto many. Let the life that God has given us be manifest. Let us not hide it, but let us go to our former friends and make our epiphanies as Christ made his. For his glory's sake let us have our manifestation and appearance unto others. Glory be to the dying Saviour! All praise to the great Sacrifice!

Oh, that these poor, feeble words of mine would excite some interest in you about my dying Master! Be ready to die for him. And you that do not know him—think of this great mystery—that God should take your nature and become a man and die, that you might not die, and bear your sin that you should be free from it. Come and trust my Lord to-night, I pray you. While the people of God gather at the table to the breaking of bread, let your spirits hasten, not to the table and the sacrament, but to Christ himself and his sacrifice. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xxvii. 35—54.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—300, 280.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MESSAGES OF OUR LORD'S LOVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 5th, 1888.

"Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."—Mark xvi. 7.

SEE, brethren! Jesus delights to meet his people. He is no sooner risen from the dead than he sends a message by an angel to say that he will meet his disciples. His delight is in them. He loves them with a very tender love, and he is happiest when he is in their midst. Do not think that you will have to entreat and persuade your Lord to come to you; he delights in near and dear fellowship. The heavenly Bridegroom finds solace in your company, if you be indeed espoused to him. Oh, that you were more anxious to be with him!

Our Lord knows that, to his true people, the greatest joy they ever have is for him to meet them. The disciples were at their saddest. Their Lord, as they thought, was dead. They had just passed the dreariest Sabbath of their lives, for he was in the tomb; and now, to comfort them, he sends no message but this—that he will meet them. He knew that there would be magic in that news to cheer their aching hearts. *He would meet them:* that would be all-sufficient consolation: "Go into Galilee; there shall ye see *him*."

If all the sorrows of God's people could be poured out in one vast pile, what a mountain they would make! How varied our distresses! How diverse our depressions! But, beloved, if Jesus will meet us, all the sadness will fly away, and all the sorrow will grow light. Only give us his company, and we have all things. You know what I mean, many of you. Our Lord has made our hearts to leap for joy in sorrowful times. When we have been filled with physical pain, his company has made us forget the body's weakness; and when we have newly come from the grave, and our heart has been ready to break through bereavement, the sight of the Saviour has sweetened our bitter cup. In his presence we have felt resigned to the great Father's will, and content to say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." Until the day break, and the shadows flee away for ever, we want nothing but our Well-beloved's company. "Abide

with me! Abide with me!"—this is our one prayer; and if we have that fulfilled, all other desires may wait their turn.

My subject is chosen with a view to our coming, as we always do on the first day of the week, to this table of communion. I want every child of God here to seek after, nay, to gain, full fellowship with Christ. I long to enjoy it myself, that I may preach a Saviour in whose presence I live. I long for you to enjoy it, that you may hear, not my voice, but his voice, which is sweeter than the music of angels' harps. Oh, that those who do not know our Lord may now be set a-hungering after his surpassing sweetness! He is willing to come to you. A prayer will find him; a tear will draw him; a look of faith will hold him fast. Cast yourself on Jesus, and his open arms will joyously receive you.

But now to the text. I shall take it just as it stands, and make five observations upon it.

I. The first is: JESUS, THAT HE MAY MEET HIS PEOPLE, ISSUES INVITATIONS, AND THE INVITATIONS ARE VERY GRACIOUS—"Go, tell his disciples and Peter." "*Tell his disciples.*" The invitation is most gracious as directed to them, for "they all forsook him, and fled." On that night, that doleful night, when he most needed company, they slept; and when he woke, and was taken off to the hall of Caiaphas, they fled—yes, every one of them; there was not a steadfast spirit among them. They all fled. "Shame on them!" say you? Yes, but Jesus was not ashamed of them; for in one of the first speeches of his glorious life on earth he specially mentions them. "Tell my disciples": not picking and choosing, here and there, a heart more faithful than the rest, but mentioning the whole coward company, he says, "Tell my disciples." Brethren, disciples of Christ, Jesus would meet us now; let us hasten to his presence. Not one among us dares plume himself upon his fidelity; we have all at times played the coward. We may each one of us hide our faces when we think of our Lord's most faithful love to us. We have never acted towards him according to his deserts. If he had banished us: if he had said, "I will no more acknowledge this dastard company," we could not have wondered; but he invites us all, all who are his disciples—invites us to himself. Will you stay away? Will any of you be satisfied without beholding that dear countenance, more marred than that of any man, and yet more lovely than the face of angels? Come ye, all who follow him, for he bids you come. Hear the address of the message—"Tell my disciples."

But the bounty and beauty of his grace lay in this—that one had been worse than the rest, and, therefore, for him there is a special finger to beckon him, a special word to call him: "Tell my disciples AND PETER." He that denied his Lord, he that cursed as he denied, he who, after boisterous self-confidence, trembled at the jest of a maid, is he to be called? Yes, "Tell my disciples *and Peter.*" If any of you have behaved worse to your Master than others, you are peculiarly called to come to him now. You have grieved him, and you have been grieving because you have grieved him. You have been brought to repentance after having slidden away from him, and now he seals your pardon by inviting you to himself. He bids you not to stand

in the background, but to come in with the rest and commune with him.

Peter, where art thou? The crowing of the cock is still in thine ear, and the tear is still in thine eye, yet come and welcome, for thou lovest him. He knows thou dost. Thou art grieved that a doubt should be put upon thy love. Come, he has forgiven thee; he has given thee tokens of it in thy broken heart and tearful eye. Come, Peter! Come thou, if nobody else should come. Jesus Christ invites thee by name before any other. In this place may be believers who have acted strangely, and have even forsaken the Lord, and they are now bemoaning themselves. Go on with your holy sorrow, but come to your Lord. Be not content till you have seen him, till you have laid hold upon him by a fresh grip of faith, and till you can say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

Most tender, then, are the invitations which Jesus issues. Part of the tenderness now lies in *the lips which deliver the message* on the Lord's behalf. The women came, and said—Jesus has said to us, by an angel, he will go before us into Galilee, and there shall ye see him. I am always thankful that God has committed the ministry of the Word, not to angels, but to us poor men. As I told you a little while ago, you may grow tired of me and my stammerings; but yet they are more suitable for you than nobler strains might be. I have no doubt that if you had an angel to preach to you, there would be a very great crowd, and for a time you would say, "It is wonderful"; but it would be so cold from lack of human sympathy, that you would soon weary of the lofty style. An angel would try to be kind, as became his heavenly nature, but he would not be *kinned*, and you must necessarily miss the kindness which comes of kinship. I speak to you as bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh: I speak to you, teacher, for I am a teacher. I speak to you, disciple, for I am a disciple, and I dare not think myself greater than the least of you. Let us come hand in hand to our dear Saviour, and all together let us pray him to manifest himself to us as he doth not unto the world. This, then, is my first point—his invitations are gracious.

II. Secondly, we see in our text that JESUS KEEPS HIS TRYST. "I will go before you into Galilee." If you turn to Mark xiv. 27, 28, you will see that he told them before he died, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." He will be where he says he will be. Jesus never breaks a promise. It is a great vexation, especially to us who are very busy, when somebody says, "Will you meet me at such and such a place?" "Yes; at what hour?" The hour is appointed. We are there. Thank God, we never were a half minute behind time when it was possible to be punctual; but punctuality is a lesson which very few persons as yet have learned. We wait, and wait wearily, and perhaps we leave the place to let our dilatory friends know that if they are in eternity we are in time, and cannot afford to lose any of it. Many people make an engagement and break it, as if it were just nothing at all to be guilty of a practical lie. It is not so with Jesus: he says, "I will go before you into Galilee"; and into Galilee he will go.

When he promises to meet his people he will meet with them without fail, and without delay.

Let us dwell on this appointment for a minute. Why did our Lord say that he would go to Galilee? Was it because *it was his old haunt*, and being risen from the dead, he desired to go back to the spot where he had been accustomed to be—to the lake, and to the hillside? Surely there is something in that. It was *their* old haunt, too: they were fishermen on that lake, and he would take them back to the place where a thousand memories would be awakened by their voices, like echoes which lie asleep among the hills. Besides it would provide witnesses to his identity, for the Galileans knew him well: since there he had been brought up. He would go where he was known, and show himself in his former places of resort.

Perhaps, too, it was because *the place was despised.* He has risen, and he will go to Galilee. He is not ashamed to be called the Galilean and the Nazarene. The risen One does not go to the halls of princes, but to the villages of peasants and fishermen. There was no pride in Jesus: not even the smell of that fire had passed upon him. He was ever meek and lowly in heart.

Did he not also go to Galilee, because *it was some little distance* from Jerusalem, that those who would meet him might take a little trouble? Our Beloved would be sought after. A journey after him will endear his society. He will not meet you at Jerusalem, perhaps—at least, not the whole company of you; but he will show himself by the sea in distant Galilee.

Do you think he went to Galilee because *it was "Galilee of the Gentiles,"* that he might get as near to us Gentiles as his mission allowed? He was sent as a preacher only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but he travelled to the very edge of his diocese to get as near to the Gentiles (I mean to ourselves) as he could. Oh, happy word for us aliens!—"I will go before you into Galilee." So he said; and when he left the tomb, he kept his word.

Now, beloved, we have his word for it, that he will come and meet us where we are met together. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"; and does he not keep his word? How many times in our assemblies, great and small, have we said, "The Lord was there"! How frequently have we forgotten preacher and fellow-worshippers, feeling ourselves in the presence of a greater than mortal man! Our eyes of faith have seen the King in his beauty, revealing his love to us. Oh, yes! he keeps his tryst. He comes to his people, and he never disappoints them. I think this is particularly true of the table of communion. How often he has met us there! I am compelled to repeat my personal testimony. I have never omitted being at the Lord's table on any Sabbath of my life for many years past, except when I have been ill, or unable to attend; and I am therefore able to answer the question—Does not frequency diminish the solemnity of the ordinance? I have not found it so; but the rather it grows upon me. That broken bread, that poured out wine, the emblems of his flesh and blood—these bring him very near. It seems as if sense lent aid to faith; and through these two windows of agates, and gates of carbuncles, we come very near to our

Lord. What have we here but himself, under instructive emblems? What do we here but remember him? What is our business here but to show his death until he come? And so, though we may not have seen him in converse by the way, for our eyes have been holden, yet we have seen him in the breaking of bread. May it be always so! May we prove that Jesus keeps his pledge. He will be with us even now. Suppose Jesus had said that he would come into this place to-night in literal flesh and blood, you would be all sitting in expectation, and saying to each other, "When will he come?" The preacher would be waiting to drop back, or fall upon his knees in adoration, while his Master stood in the front. You will not see him *so;* but may your faith, which is much better than eyesight, realize him as the present Christ, near to each one of you. If he were here in the flesh, he might stand *here*, and then he might be near to me, but far off from my friends yonder; but coming in spirit he can be equally near to us all, and speak to each one of us personally, as though each one were the only person present.

III. My third observation is, JESUS IS ALWAYS FIRST AT EVERY APPOINTED MEETING. So runs the text: "*He goeth before you* into Galilee." Remember that promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there *am* I"—not "there will I be." Jesus is there before his disciples reach the place. The first to reach the house is he who is first in the house. We come to him: it is not that we meet, and then he comes to us; but he goes before us, and we gather to him.

Does it not teach us that *he is the shepherd?* He said, "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; but after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." He would take up the shepherd's place again, and go before the flock, and the sheep would take up the position of the flock again, no longer scattered, but following at the Shepherd's heel. Great Master, come to-night; call thy sheep to thyself! Speak to us, look upon us, and we will arise, and follow thee.

Is he not first, next, because *he is the centre?* We gather to him. You must choose a centre before you can mark the circumference. When Israel travelled through the wilderness, the first place to pitch upon for an encampment was the place where the tabernacle and the ark should rest, and then the tents were set around it. Jesus is our centre; he must therefore be first, and we rejoice to hear him say, "I will go before you into Galilee." He will take the first place, and we will cluster about him as bees around their queen. Do you always gather to the name of Christ, beloved? If you gather to the name of any minister, or any sect, you gather amiss. Our gatherings must be unto the Lord Jesus: he must be the centre, and he alone; let us take care of that.

Next, he goes before us naturally, because *he is the host.* If there is to be a feast, the first person to be there is the one who provides it—the master or mistress who sits at the head of the table. It would never do for the guests to be there first, and then for the master to come hurrying home, crying, "Excuse me: I quite forgot that you were to be here at six o'clock!" Oh no, the host must be first! When Jesus bids us come to him, and says he will sup with us, and

we with him, he will be sure to be first, so as to prepare the feast. He goes before us into Galilee.

But surely, the reason why he is first is this—that *he is more ready for us than we are for him.* It takes us time to get ready for communion, to dress our souls, and collect our thoughts. Are you all ready for the Lord's Supper to-night? Some of you, perhaps, have come carelessly here, and yet you are members of the church, and mean to stay to the Supper. Beloved, try to come with a prepared heart, for the communion will be to you very much what you make it; and if your thoughts and desires are not right, what can the outward emblems be to you? On our Lord's part all things are ready, and he waits to receive you, and to bless you. Therefore he is first at the appointed meeting-place.

I may also add that *he is much more eager to have fellowship with you than you are to have fellowship with him.* It is a strange thing that it should be so, but so it is. He, the great lover of our souls, burns with a passionate desire to press his people to his heart; and we, the objects of such a matchless love, start back, and reward the ardour of his affection with lukewarmness. It must not be so on this occasion. I have said to my Lord, "Let me either feast upon thee or hunger after thee." I pray that you may have such a burning thirst for Jesus at this hour that you *must* drink of his cup or pine with thirst for him.

IV. The fourth observation is this: THE LORD JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE. How does the text run? "He goeth before you into Galilee. *There shall ye see him.*" The main object is to *see him.* He will go to Galilee on purpose that he may reveal himself to them. My dear brethren, this is what they needed beyond all else. Their sorrow was because they thought him dead; their joy would be because they saw him alive. Their griefs were multiform, but this one consolation would end them all. If they could but see Jesus, they would look their fears away. What have you come here for to-night, children of God? I trust that you can answer, "Sir, we would see Jesus." If our Master will come, and we shall feel his presence, it will not matter how feebly I speak, or how poor the service may be in itself; you will say, "It was good to be there, for the Lord drew near to us in all the glory of his love." *His presence is what you want.*

And *this is what he readily gives.* Jesus is very familiar with his people. Some worship a Saviour who sits enthroned above in the stately dignity of indifference; but our Lord is not so. Though reigning in heaven, he is still conversant with his people below. He is a brother born for adversity. Spiritually he communes with us. Do you know what the company of Christ is? Are you altogether taken up with doctrines about him, or with ceremonies that concern him? If so, yours is a poor life; but the joy of the inner life is to know, and to speak with, and to dwell with the Lord Jesus. Do you understand this? I charge you, be not satisfied till you come to personal and intimate intercourse with your Lord. Short of this, you are short of the privilege which he sees you need, for this is his great promise, "There shall ye see me."

What is more, this sight of him *is what our Lord effectually bestows.* Jesus not only exhibits himself, but he opens our eyes, that we may enjoy the sight. "There *shall* ye see me." He may be manifest, and yet blind eyes will not see him. Blessed Master, come and take the scales away and make our hearts capable of spiritual perception! It is not everybody that can see God, and yet God is everywhere. The eye must first be cleansed. Jesus says, "There shall ye see me"; and he knows how to open our eyes, so that we do see him. Our Lord can make this to be the absorbing occupation of his people. "He goeth before you into Galilee"—and what then? "There shall ye see him." Why, they went fishing, did they not? Yes, but they were called off from that. "There shall ye see him." They took a great haul of fish, did they not? Yes, yes, yes; but that was a mere incident: the grand fact was, that they *saw him.* I pray the Lord to make the one occupation of our lives the seeing of HIM. May all the lower lights grow dim. Where are the stars at midday? They are all in their places, but you only see the sun. Where are a thousand things when Christ appears? They are all where they should be, but you only see *him.* May the Lord cause all other loves to vanish, and himself alone to fill our hearts, so that it may be true of us, "There shall ye see him"!

I have thus far proceeded, crying to the Holy Ghost for help, and now comes the fifth observation, with which we close.

V. OUR LORD REMEMBERS HIS OWN PROMISES. It was before he died that he said he would go before them into Galilee, and now that he has risen from the dead, he says, by the mouth of his angel, "There shall ye see him, *as he said unto you.*" The rule of Christ's action is his own word. What he has said he will perform. You and I forget his promises, but *he* never does. "As he said unto you" is the remembrance of all that he has spoken. Why does our Lord remember and repeat what he has so graciously spoken?

He does so because *he spoke with foresight*, and forethought, and care. We make promises and forget them because we did not consider well the matter before we spoke; but if we have thought, calculated, weighed, estimated, and come to a deliberate resolve before we speak, then we earnestly remember what we resolved upon. No promise of our Lord Jesus has been spoken in haste, to be repented of afterwards. Infinite wisdom directs infinite love; and when infinite love takes the pen to write a promise, infallible wisdom dictates every syllable.

Jesus does not forget, because *he spoke the promise with his whole heart.* It is not every tongue that represents a heart at all; but even though true people, we say many things which we mean, but there is no depth of feeling, no potent emotion, no stirring of the heart's centre. Our Lord, when he said, "Ye shall be scattered; but after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee," spoke with a heavy heart, with many a melting sigh; and his whole soul went with the promise which closed the mournful scene. He has purchased what he promised, purchased it with his blood, and therefore he speaks most solemnly, and with his whole heart. There is no trifling on Christ's part with one to whom he makes a promise, and therefore he never forgets.

And, once more, *his honour is bound up with every promise.* If he

had said that he would go to Galilee, and he had not gone, his disciples would have felt that he had made a mistake, or that he had failed. Brethren, if Christ's promise were to fail, what should we think of it? But he will never jeopardize his faithfulness and veracity.

"As well might he his being quit,
As break his promise or forget,"

Let the words of man be blown away like the chaff; but the words of Jesus must stand, for he will not tarnish his truth, which is one of the choicest of his crown-jewels.

I want you to turn over this thought in your quietude. Jesus remembers all that he has spoken; let not our hearts forget. Go to him with his covenant bonds and gracious promises: he will recognize his own signature. He will honour his own promises to the utmost, and none that trust in him shall complain of his having exaggerated.

I have done when I have said just this. I am very anxious that at this time we should come into real fellowship with Christ, at the table. Jesus, thou hast made us hunger after thee; wilt thou not feed us? Thou hast made us thirst after thee; wilt thou not supply that thirst? Do you think that our Beloved means to tantalize us? Our hunger is such that it would break through stone walls; shall we find his heart hard as a stone wall? No; he will clear the way, and we on our part will burst through all obstacles to come to him. "But," says one, "how can *I* come to him, poor, unknown, unworthy one that I am?" Such were the disciples at the lake. They were fishermen; and when he came to them, they had been toiling all night. Are you working for him? Then he will come to you. Expect him now. "Ah!" says one, "I have been working without success"—you are a poor minister whose congregation is falling off, whose church is not increased by conversions—you have toiled all the night, and taken nothing. Or you are a Sunday-school teacher, who cannot see her girls converted; or a brother who mourns that his boys are not coming to Christ. Well, I see who you are; you are just the sort of people that Jesus came to, for they had toiled all night in vain. Are you hungry? Jesus cries, "Children, have you any meat?" He comes to you and enquires about your hunger; while on the shore he has a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread. "Come and dine," says he. The table is spread. Come to himself! He is your food, your hope, your joy, your heaven. Come to him; give him no rest till he reveals himself to you, and you know of a surety that it is your Lord who embraces you. So may he do, to each of us just now, for his sweet love's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark xvi. 1—14.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—385, 784, 785.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE EVIDENCE OF OUR LORD'S WOUNDS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, December 2nd, 1877.

"Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."—John xx. 27.

Among us at this day we have many persons who are like Thomas—dubious, demanding signs and tokens, suspicious, and ofttimes sad. I am not sure that there is not a slight touch of Thomas in most of us. There are times and seasons when the strong man fails, and when the firm believer has to pause a while, and say, "Is it so?" It may be that our meditation upon the text before us may be of service to those who are touched with the malady which afflicted Thomas.

Notice, before we proceed to our subject in full, that *Thomas asked of our Lord what he ought not to have asked.* He wanted to put our risen Lord to tests which were scarcely reverent to his sacred person. Admire his Master's patience with him. He does not say, "If he does not choose to believe he may continue to suffer for his unbelief." But no; he fixes his eye upon the doubter, and addresses himself specially to him; yet not in words of reproach or anger. Jesus could bear with Thomas, though Thomas had been a long time with him, and had not known him. To put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, was much more than any disciple had a right to ask of his divine Master; and yet see the condescension of Jesus! Rather than Thomas should suffer from unbelief, Christ will let him take great liberties. Our Lord does not always act towards us according to his own dignity, but according to our necessity; and if we really are so weak that nothing will do but thrusting a hand into his side, he will let us do it. Nor do I wonder at this: if, for our sakes, he suffered a spear to be thrust there, he may well permit a hand to follow.

Observe that *Thomas was at once convinced.* He said: "My Lord, and my God." This shows our Master's wisdom, that he indulged him with such familiarity, because he knew that, though the demand

was presumptuous, yet the act would work for his good. Our Lord sometimes wisely refuses—saying, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended"; but at other times, he wisely grants, because, though it be too much for us to ask, yet he thinks it wise to give.

The subject for our present meditation is just this: *the cure of doubts.* Thomas was permitted to put his finger into the print of the nails for the curing of his doubts. Perhaps you and I wish that we could do something like it. Oh, if our Lord Jesus would appear to me for once, and I might thrust my hand into his side; or, if I might for once see him, or speak with him, how confirmed should I be! No doubt that thought has arisen in the minds of many. We shall not have such proofs, my brethren, but we shall have something near akin to them, which will answer the same purpose.

I. The first head of my discourse shall be this: CRAVE NO SIGNS. If such signs be possible, crave them not. If there be dreams, visions, voices, ask not for them.

Crave not wonders, first, because *it is dishonouring to the sacred Word to ask for them.* You believe this Bible to be an inspired volume —the Book of God. The apostle Peter calls it "A more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." Are you not satisfied with that? When a person, in whose veracity you have the utmost confidence, bears testimony to this or that, if you straightway reply, "I would be glad of further evidence," you are slighting your friend, and casting unjust suspicion upon him. Will you cast suspicion upon the Holy Ghost, who, by this word, bears witness unto Christ? Oh, no! let us be content with his witness. Let us not wish to see, but remain satisfied to believe. If there be difficulties in believing, is it not natural there should be, when he that believes is finite, and the things to be believed are, in themselves, infinite? Let us accept the difficulties as being in themselves, in some measure, proofs of the correctness of our position, as inevitable attendants of heavenly mysteries, when they are looked at by such poor minds as ours. Let us believe the Word, and crave no signs.

Crave no signs, because *it is unreasonable that we should desire more than we have already.* The testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, contained in the Word, should alone suffice us. Beside that, we have the testimony of saints and martyrs, who have gone before us, dying triumphant in the faith. We have the testimony of many still among us, who tell us that these things are so. In part, we have the testimony of our own conscience, of our own conversion, of our own after-experience, and this is convincing testimony. Let us be satisfied with it. Thomas ought to have been content with the testimony of Mary Magdalene, and the other disciples, but he was not. We ought to trust our brethren's word. Let us not be unreasonable in craving after proofs when already proofs are afforded us without stint.

Crave no signs, because *it may be you will be presumptuous in so doing.* Who are you, to set God a sign? What is it he is to do before you will believe in him? Suppose he does not choose to do it, are you therefore arrogantly to say, "I refuse to believe unless the Lord will do my bidding"? Do you imagine that any angel would demean himself to pay attention to you, who set yourself up to make demands

of the Most High? Assuredly not. It is presumption which dares to ask of God anything more than the testimony of himself which he chooses to grant us in his Word.

It is, moreover, damaging to ourselves to crave signs. Jesus says, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Thomas had his sign, and he believed; and so far so good, but he missed a blessing peculiar to those who have not seen, and yet have believed. Do not, therefore, rob yourselves of the special favour which lights on those who, with no evidence but the witness of the Spirit of God, are prepared at once to believe in the Lord Jesus unto eternal life.

Again, crave no signs, for *this craving is highly perilous.* Translated according to many, and I think translated correctly, our Saviour said, "Reach hither thy finger, and put it into the print of the nails; and *become* not faithless, but believing," intending to indicate that Thomas, by degrees, would become faithless. His faith had grown to be so little that, if he continued insisting upon this and that, as a sign or evidence, that faith of his would get down to the very lowest; yea, he would have no faith left. "Become not faithless, but believing." Dear friends, if you began to seek signs, and if you were to see them, do you know what would happen? Why, you would want more; and when you had these, you would demand still more. Those who live by their feelings judge of the truth of God by their own condition. When they have happy feelings, then they believe; but if their spirits sink, if the weather happens to be a little damp, or if their constitution happens to be a little disordered, down go their spirits, and, straightway, down goes their faith. He that lives by a faith which does not rest on feeling, but is built upon the Word of the Lord, will remain fixed and steadfast as the mount of God; but he that craves for this thing and that thing, as a token for good at the hand of the Lord, stands in danger of perishing from want of faith. He shall not perish, if he has even a grain of living faith, for God will deliver him from the temptation; but the temptation is a very trying one to faith.

Crave, therefore, no sign. If you read a story of a person who saw a vision, or if you hear another declare that a voice spake to him—believe those things, or not, as you like; but do not desire them for yourself. These wonders may, or may not, be freaks of the imagination: I will not judge; but we must not rely upon them, for we are not to walk by sight, but by faith. Rely not upon anything that can be seen of the eyes, or heard of the ears; but simply trust him whom we know to be the Christ of God, the Rock of our salvation.

II. Secondly, when you want comfort, crave no sign, but TURN TO THE WOUNDS OF YOUR LORD. You see what Thomas did. He wanted faith, and he looked for it to Jesus wounded. He says nothing about Christ's head crowned with glory. He does not say that he must see him "girt about the paps with a golden girdle." Thomas, even in his unbelief, is wise; he turns to his Lord's wounds for comfort. Whenever your unbelief prevails, follow in this respect the conduct of Thomas, and turn your eyes straightway to the wounds of Jesus. These are the founts of never-failing consolation, from which, if a man doth once drink, he shall forget his misery, and remember his sorrow no more. Turn to the Lord's wounds; and if you do, what will you see?

First, you will see *the tokens of your Master's love.* O Lord Jesus, what are these wounds in thy side, and in thy hands? He answers, "These I endured when suffering for thee. How can I forget thee? I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. How can I ever fail to remember thee? On my very heart the spear has written thy name." Look at Jesus, dead, buried, risen, and then say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me"! There is no restorative for a sinking faith like a sight of the wounded Saviour. Look, soul, and live by the proofs of his death! Come and put thy finger, by faith, into the print of the nails, and these wounds shall heal thee of unbelief. The wounds of our Lord are the tokens of his love.

They are, again, *the seals of his death*, especially that wound in his side. He must have died; for "one of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare witness." The Son of God did assuredly die. God, who made the heavens and the earth, took to himself our nature, and in one wondrous person he was both God and man; and lo! this wondrous Son of God bore sufferings unutterable, and consummated all by his death. This is our comfort, for if he died in our stead, then we shall not die for our sins; our transgression is put away, and our iniquity is pardoned. If the sacrifice had never been slain, we might despair; but since the spear-wound proves that the great Sacrifice really died, despair is slain, hope revives, and confidence rejoices.

The wounds of Jesus, next, are *the marks of identity.* By these we identify his blessed person after his resurrection. The very Christ that died has risen again. There is no illusion: there could be no mistake. It is not somebody else foisted upon us in his place; but Jesus who died has left the dead, for there are the marks of the crucifixion in his hands and in his feet, and there is the spear-thrust still. It is Jesus: this same Jesus. This is a matter of great comfort to a Christian—this indisputably proven doctrine of the resurrection of our Lord. It is the keystone of the gospel arch. Take that away, or doubt it, and there remains nothing to console you. But because Jesus died and in the selfsame person rose again, and ever lives, therefore does our heart sweetly rest, believing that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"; and also that the whole of the work of Jesus is true, is completed, and is accepted of God.

Again, those wounds, those scars of our Lord, were *the memorials of his love to his people.* They set forth his love so that his chosen can see the tokens; but they are also memorials to himself. He condescendingly bears these as his reminders. In heaven, at this moment, upon the person of our blessed Lord, there are the scars of his crucifixion. Centuries have gone by, and yet he looks like a Lamb that has been slain. Our first glance will assure us that this is he of whom they said, "Crucify him; crucify him." Steadily look with the eyes of your faith into the glory, and see your Master's wounds, and say within yourself, "He has compassion upon us still: he bears the marks of his passion." Look up, poor sufferer! Jesus knows what physical pain means. Look up, poor depressed one! he knows what a broken heart means. Canst thou not perceive this? Those prints upon

his hands, these sacred stigmata, declare that he has not forgotten what he underwent for us, but still has a fellow-feeling for us.

Once again, these wounds may comfort us because in heaven they are, before God and the holy angels, *the perpetual ensigns of his finished work*. That passion of his can never be repeated, and never needs to be: "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, he sat down on the right hand of God." But the memorials are always being presented before the infinite mind of God. Those memorials are, in part, the wounds in our Lord's blessed person. Glorified spirits can never cease to sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"; for every time they gaze upon him they perceive his scars. How resplendent shine the nail-prints! No jewels that ever gemmed a king can look one-half so lustrous as these. Though he be God over all blessed for ever, yet to us, at least, his brightest splendour comes from his death.

My hearer, whensoever thy soul is clouded, turn thou to these wounds which shine like a constellation of five bright stars. Look not to thine own wounds, nor to thine own pains, or sins, or prayers, or tears, but remember that "with his stripes we are healed." Gaze, then; intently gaze, upon thy Redeemer's wounds if thou wouldest find comfort.

III. This brings me to my third point, whenever faith is staggered at all, SEEK SUCH HELPS FOR YOUR FAITH AS YOU MAY. Though we cannot literally put our finger into the print of the nails, and may not wish to do so, yet let us use such modes of recognition as we do possess. Let us put these to their utmost use; and we shall no longer desire to put our hand into the Saviour's side. We shall be perfectly satisfied without that. Ye that are troubled with doubts and fears, I give you these recommendations.

First, if you would have your faith made vivid and strong, *study much the story of your Saviour's death*. Read it: read it: read it: read it. "*Tolle: lege*," said the voice to Augustine, "Take it: read it." So say I. Take the four evangelists; take the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah; take the twenty-second psalm; take all other parts of Scripture that relate to our suffering Substitute, and read them by day and by night, till you familiarize yourself with the whole story of his griefs and sin-bearing. Keep your mind intently fixed upon it; not sometimes, but continually. *Crux lux:* the cross is light. Thou shalt see it by its own light. The study of the narrative, if thou pray the Holy Ghost to enlighten thee, will beget faith in thee; and thou wilt, by its means, be very greatly helped, till, at last, thou wilt say, "I cannot doubt. The truth of the atonement is impressed upon my memory, my heart, my understanding. The record has convinced me."

Next, if this suffice not, *frequently contemplate the sufferings of Jesus*. I mean by that, when you have read the story, sit down, and try and picture it. Let your mind conceive it as passing before you. Put yourself into the position of the apostles who saw him die. No employment will so greatly strengthen faith, and certainly none will be more enjoyable!

> "Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
> Which before the cross I spend,
> Life and health and peace possessing
> From the sinner's dying Friend."

An hour would be grandly spent if occupied in turning over each little detail, item, and incident in the marvellous death by which you are redeemed from death and hell. You will be surprised to find how this familiarizing of yourself with it, by the help of the Holy Spirit, will make it as vivid to you as if you saw it; and it will have a better effect upon your mind than the sight of it would have done; for probably the actual sight would have passed away from your mind, and have been forgotten, while the contemplation of the sorrowful scene will sink deep into your soul, and leave eternal lines! You will do well, first, to read and know the narrative, and then to contemplate it carefully and earnestly—I mean, not to think of it for a minute or two at chance times, but to take an hour or two that you can specially set apart on purpose to consider the story of your Saviour's death. I am persuaded, if you do this, it will be more helpful to you than putting his finger into the print of the nails was to Thomas.

What next? Why, dear friends, the Lord has a way of *giving his people wonderful realizations*. I hope I shall not say anything incorrect when I remark that there are times with us when the Lord is present with us, and we are strongly impressed with that fact, and therefore we act under a sense of that presence as if the divine glory were actually visible. Do you know what it is to write a letter to a friend feeling as if the Lord Jesus were looking over your shoulder? I know what it is at times to stand here and preach, and feel my Lord so near me that if I had literally seen him it would not have surprised me. Have you never, in the watches of the night, lain quiet when there was no sound but the ticking of the watch, and thought of your Lord till, though you knew there was no form before you, you were just as certain that he was there as if you could see his sorrowful countenance? In quiet places all alone—you scarcely like to tell the story—in the lone wood, and in the upper chamber—you have said, "If he spake I should not be more certain of his presence; and if he smiled upon me I should not be surer of his love." These realizations have sometimes been so joyfully overwhelming that for years you have been lifted by them beyond all power of doubt. These holy summer days banish the frosts of the soul. Whenever a doubt is suggested to me about the existence of my Lord and Master, I feel that I can laugh the tempter to scorn, for I have seen him, and spoken with him. Not with these eyes, but with the eyes of my inner life, I have beheld my Lord, and communed with him. Wonder not that I am not among the crew of the black, piratical ship of "Modern Thought."

Nor is it merely in seasons of enjoyment that we get these helps, but in times of *deep distress*. Prostrate with pain, unable to enjoy any comfort, unable even to sleep, I have seen the soul of the believer as happy as if all sounds were marriage peals. Some of us know what it is to be right gleesome, glad, and joyous in hours of fierce trial, because Christ has been so near. In times of losses and bereavements, when the sorrow stung you to the quick, and you thought, before it came, that you never could bear it, yet have you been so sustained by a sight of the sacred head once wounded, and by fellowship with him in his sufferings, that you have said, "What are my griefs compared with

his?" You have forgotten your sorrows and sung for joy of heart, as those that make merry. If you have been helped in this way, it will have all the effect upon you that ever could have come of putting your finger into the print of the nails. If, perchance, you have been given up to die, and have, mentally, gone through the whole process of dying, expecting soon to stand before the bar of God, and have been happy, and even exultant, then you could not doubt the reality of a religion that bore you up above the surging billows. Now that you are again restored to life for a little longer time, the recollection of your buoyant spirits, in what you thought to be your dying hours, will answer all the purpose to you, I think, of putting your finger into the nail-prints.

Sometimes the strengthening influence may be afforded under the stress of *temptation*. If ever, young man, you have had a strong temptation hurling itself against you, and your feet have almost gone —ay, let me not say "young man"; but if ever a man or a woman of any age has had to cry out, "God, help me: how shall I escape out of this?" and you have turned your eyes and seen your Lord and beheld his wounds; and if you have felt at that moment that the temptation had lost all power, you have had a seal from the Lord, and your faith has been confirmed. If at the sight of your Lord you have exclaimed, in presence of the temptation, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" after that, you have had the best proof of your Redeemer's power to save. What better or more practical proof could you desire?

In these times, when the foundations of our faith are constantly being undermined, one is sometimes driven to say to himself, "Suppose it is not true." As I stood, the other night, beneath the sky, and watched the stars, I felt my heart going up to the great Maker with all the love that I was capable of. I said to myself, "What made me love God as I know I do? What made me feel an anxiety to be like him in purity? Whatever made me long to obey my God cannot be a lie." I know that it was the love of Jesus for me that changed my heart, and made me, though once careless and indifferent to him, now to pant with strong desires to honour him. What has done this? Not a lie, surely. A truth, then, has done it. I know it by its fruits. If this Bible were to turn out untrue, and if I died and went before my Maker, could I not say to him, "I believed great things of thee, great God; if it be not so, yet did I honour thee by the faith I had concerning thy wondrous goodness, and thy power to forgive"? and I would cast myself upon his mercy without fear. But we do not entertain such doubts; for those dear wounds continually prove the truth of the gospel, and the truth of our salvation by it. Incarnate Deity is a thought that was never invented by poet's mind, nor reasoned out by philosopher's skill. Incarnate Deity, the notion of the God that lived, and bled, and died in human form, instead of guilty man, it is itself its own best witness. The wounds are the infallible witness of the gospel of Christ.

Have you not felt those wounds very powerful to you in the form of *assistance in times of duty?* You said, "I cannot do it, it is too hard for me." You looked to Jesus wounded, and you could do anything. A sight of the bleeding Christ has often filled us with enthusiasm,

and so with power: it has rendered us mighty with the omnipotence of God. Look at the church of Christ in all ages. Kings and princes did not know what to do with her. They vowed that they would destroy her. Their persecuting edicts went forth, and they put to death thousands upon thousands of the followers of Christ. But what happened? The death of Jesus made men willing to die for him. No pain, no torture, could keep back the believing host. They loved Jesus so that though their leaders fell by bloody deaths, another rank came on, and yet another, and another, till despots saw that neither dungeon, nor rack, nor fire could stop the march of the army of Christ. It is so now. Christ's wounds pour life into the church by transfusion: the life-blood of the church of God is from Jesus' wounds. Let us know its power and feel it working within us to will and to do of his good pleasure.

And as for those who do not trust him, what shall I say? The Lord help you to do so at once; for as long as you do not trust him, you are under an awful curse, for it is written, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—cursed at the coming of the Lord. May it not be so with you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xx. 18—31.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—785, 937, 282.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED READERS,—Thanks be unto God for thirty-four volumes of sermons thus completed. May they continue to be blest of God long after the preacher and his present readers have entered into rest. The speaker is still laid aside by weakness, but the word of the Lord never loses its power. His voice can only be heard of a few thousands, but the printed page will talk to multitudes. Let us pray that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit may sound in the heart of readers for many generations to come.

A book may enclose the spikenard of a truth, which, when forgotten, it shall give back to men with all its first perfume. The generation which now is may treat the doctrines of grace as if they were worthless, but these priceless gems will yet be prized by a more enlightened age, and judged to be of infinitely more value than all the tinsel which amuses our contemporaries. I am content to preach to-day to a comparatively small circle, since I believe that the truths I deliver are revealed of God for the salvation of multitudes innumerable, and that in some future day the Lord whom I serve will vindicate every faithful testifier of them from the reproach of men. At the same time, I praise God that even so many have been found faithful to the ancient faith of our fathers. Grace be with them all.

At the close of the year I salute my brethren, and entreat a place in their daily prayers. Ask that I may be allowed to return to my pulpit in health, and may see the cause of our Lord prospering everywhere.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Mentone, Dec. 20th, 1888. C. H. SPURGEON.

END OF VOLUME XXXIV.

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